

OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL
SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL
WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER
First Sunday of Advent
December 3, 2023



Now, is not a time to sleep because there is a lot to do: glorify God, personal salvation, benefit your neighbor, overcome worldliness, eradicate sin, obtain new graces - Rise up from your sleep and keep watch at all times.

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 2 *Vigil of the 1st Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm Seeking God's help for peace in the world

Sunday, December 3 *First Sunday of Advent*

7:30am Names enrolled in OLP Purgatorial Society 2023

4:00pm +Eugene & Evelyn Foley by their family

Monday, December 4 *Saint John Damascene, priest & doctor*²

12:00nn For the intentions of Sayonara Power

Tuesday, December 5

12:00nn For the intentions of Rose and her family

Wednesday, December 6 *Saint Nicholas, bishop*²

12:00nn For those spiritually unprepared for death

Thursday, December 7 *Feast of Saint Ambrose, bishop & doctor*¹

12:00nn For Charles & Judy Black

Vigil of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the BVM

4:00pm +Shirley Robitaille by alumnae association of former SVH School of Nursing

Friday, December 8 *Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

12:00nn For the holy innocents, born & unborn

4:00pm +Jose Martins Coelho

Saturday, December 9 *Vigil of the 2nd Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm For the conversion of Larry & Sally

Sunday, December 10 *Second Sunday of Advent*

7:30am For the conversion of the Whalen family

4:00pm +Felice and George Burns

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**¹ or an **optional memorial**².

Toward a Better Understanding of This Sunday's Gospel

The brief parable of the Watchful Gatekeeper is the gospel reading for this first Sunday of the new liturgical year that forms the conclusion to the part of Saint Mark's Gospel. Scholars label it as the apocalyptic discourse. Apocalyptic literature often emerged within Judaism in the context of crisis or persecution. Such writing was intended to provide hope in the midst of disaster. The message it carried was that God's coming can reverse the sufferings of the present, a hopeful message that applies more broadly than only to the end-time. The Markan discourse constitutes a farewell teaching to the inner circle of Jesus' disciples. However, the concluding verse indicates that it was also intended for a wider audience, "what I say to you, I say to all..." Like Peter, James, and John, the Lord's disciples now, and through all the intervening ages, are invited to stay awake, to be on the lookout, to be alert. The disciples are told to be alert and watchful through the four watches of the Roman night. This passage serves to remind us about the disposition needed to wait for the coming of the Lord – "Be watchful! Be alert!" Those attributes on how to wait also echo what the evangelist Matthew encouraged, too, "Therefore, stay awake" (Mt 24:42). Yet, Saint Mark situates the Lord's return at night. While whether the second coming takes place at night or during the day might seem insignificant, in the first-century, the lack of light outside made nighttime more dangerous and threatening than it might be now. The fact that in this parable depicting the watchful gatekeeper, the Master returned at night, then, such an hour must have significance. Biblically-speaking, night is the time when the powers of evil are at their height. It is a time of suffering and unexpected surprises and, those dark hours are when you must be vigilant awaiting the coming of the Son of Man. Those darkest hours are also times to encounter God or the opportune moment for divine intervention such as when the Israelites were delivered from bondage in Egypt. In this pericope, the nocturnal setting is equivalent to the ambiguous present and its accompanying tensions – as "children of the light and children of the day. We are not of the night or darkness. Therefore...let us stay awake and sober" (1 Thess 5:5-6). Though the darkness of sin and death overshadow earthly life, anyone who believes that Christ has come and will come again are not enveloped in the dark; no, the light of Christ is within them and such a divine enlightenment keeps disciples watchful and alert. The

The Shaking of the Foundations

Let us not forget...that waiting is a tremendous tension. It precludes all complacency about having nothing, indifference or cynical contempt towards those who have something, and indulgence in doubt and despair. Let us not make our pride in possessing nothing a new possession. That is one of the great temptations of our time, for there are few things left which we can claim as possessions. And we surrender to the same temptation when we boast, in our attempt to possess God, that we do not possess Him. The divine answer to such an attempt is utter emptiness. Waiting is not despair.

It is the acceptance of our not having, in the power of that which we already have. Our time is a time of waiting; waiting is its special destiny.

delay between the Lord's Ascension back to heavenly glory and His return at the end of time is not as if Christ left His followers orphans. By a pair of extensive farewell discourses and by earnestly praying to the Father to keep His flock safe (Jn 13:31-17:26), Jesus undergirded those who believe in Him with undying hope. He also did not shield those whom He loved from the trials that were ahead, though Jesus promised them heavenly peace and the gift of the Spirit or *Advocatus* (Gk. Παράκλητον). Saint Paul, in writing to the Church in Corinth, said that "[Christ] will keep you firm to the end..." and, in doing so, the Corinthians will learn to be "irreproachable on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ." Paul's rejoinder amplifies the attitudes of watching and vigilance in regard to the eschaton or the final Advent as the ultimate manifestation of Christ. When understood in terms of another beginning, the advent or coming of the Lord is spiritual refreshment and the renewal of Gospel fervor by following behind Jesus who has come, is always coming, and will come again. The ancient cry of Isaiah the prophet remains true today as long ago, "Oh, that you would rend the heavens and come down" (Is 63:19)—a plea for a new theophany, as once happened on Mount Sinai with Moses. Despite not knowing the time when the final Advent will occur, the only proper attitude is vigilance and dwelling in God's assurance that nothing would go wrong for those disciples who do so. Believers in Christ patiently await the dawn. In the *City of God*, Saint Augustine writes, "Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the lover of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly to the love of God, even to the contempt of self" (*De Civitate Dei*, Bk XIV, Ch. 28). Despite evidence to the contrary and the seeming triumph of egoism and greed, to live in the spirit of Advent is to remain ever-hopeful that the final harvest is yet to come. Bombarding heaven with doubts as to why things are as they are, in fact, is an act of faith that "the clouds can rain down the Just One" (cf. Is 45:8). The darkness of the night is the ideal time to see and believe in the Light. The hour of Christ's return is not even known to the Son of Man, but only to God the Father (Mk 13:32). Such ambiguity only heightens the need for watchfulness. Since humanity is on the way, always moving towards something, the human condition is to be a *homo viator* or a wayfarer or constant pilgrim or, as Gabriel Marcel describes that attitude as "the itinerant man." The self-discipline of the watchman is an active vigilance that is framed by an honest appraisal, courage, and creative submission to the will of God. Being watchful requires focused effort, zeroing in on what is required to rid the night of the power of evil that impedes the dawning of salvation. Prayerful watching centers our attention on God, as Jesus asked His disciples to watch with Him in the Garden of Gethsemane, "My soul is sorrowful even to death. Remain here and keep watch with me" (Mt 26:38). Be even more vigilant "in the evening...at midnight...or at cockcrow, or in the morning" (Mt 13:35) which are the four times during the Roman night watch when the temptation to sleep is at its height. Patience is a threatened virtue in today's world where everything is marked by the descriptive word instant and an unwillingness to wait for fruit to ripen. God, however, is infinitely patient and the Father is best described as the Gardener. Putting down roots, deep into the ground of His grace, is what is necessary in order to stay "firm to the end." Whenever hope is coupled with patience, those twin-attitudes result in taming self-regard and tempering our pride. The kingdom of God is already present, though awaiting its fulfillment — already but not yet!

National Eucharistic Revival - Phase Three: The Mission Phase Beginning 30 May 2024

It's more than a year since 19 Sunday 2022 (Corpus Christi) or the launch date of the ongoing National Eucharistic Revival. Now is a time to take note of two major events scheduled during the upcoming new year in June and July 2024 that will be the capstone of the Revival: a National Eucharistic Pilgrimage (May 17-19) and the National Eucharistic Congress July 17-21 in Indianapolis. The pilgrimage has four branches starting from these four places in the continental United States: the *Marian Route* starting from the headwaters of the Mississippi River at Lake Itasca, Minnesota; the *St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route* starting from New Haven, Connecticut; the *St. Juan Diego Route* starting from Brownsville, Texas; and the *St. Junipero Serra Route* starting from San Francisco. The renewal attempts to have the Church grow in knowledge of the Eucharist, faith, amazement, love, life, charity and fervent apostolic activity. Advent, while focusing upon the second coming of Christ, this opening season of the Church's Year of Grace does so by retracing the centuries of waiting that the Jewish people engaged in for the first coming of the Messiah. Since Christ has already come, the recurrent liturgical life of the Church identifies the coming of Jesus in three amazing actions: The coming of Christ in history (time), mystery (Eucharist) and majesty (the coming of Christ at the end of time). This Advent, in conjunction with the national effort at reviving Eucharistic devotion and practice, is the ideal time to focus on the essential Advent virtues: vigilance, God's longing for us that led to the Incarnation, Christ's passion and death and, ultimately, to the altar where by receiving Communion, hope of an eternal communion is given.

Mass Schedule: Immaculate Conception of the BVM

Thursday, December 7 at 4pm

Friday, December 8 at 12nn and 4pm

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

Introduction

Each season of Advent stands at the beginning of a new liturgical year. Its title is derived from the Latin word *adventus* which biblical translators like Saint Jerome used as the Latin equivalent to the Koine Greek word *parousia* (Gk. παρουσία). Before the time of Christ, *parousia* was used to denote the visit of a royal dignitary to a provincial locale or city-state. Such a *parousia* often inaugurated a new era in political alliances. The liturgical season is derived from two distinct sources: Spain and Gaul, regions of the Roman Empire that were closely aligned with the practices found in the empire's Eastern part. Initially, this liturgical period took shape and was oriented toward Epiphany, which was the original feast of Christ's birth. More so in Gaul than Spain, due to the added influence of Celtic missionaries from Ireland, greater stress was placed on the eschatological or end time which manifested itself as the necessity of being spiritually ready for the Lord's coming in judgment and to be prepared for His return by engaging in penitential practices. In Rome, however, Advent developed later than in the provinces and the Roman focus of the season centered on the Incarnation of Christ and as a preparation for the observance of the Lord's Nativity. As a result, "Advent has a two-fold 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 forward 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). Thus, the first two weeks of Advent look forward to the Lord's return in judgment or the *parousia*, whereas the final two weeks, often known as Late Advent, look backward to Bethlehem and Christ's first coming or the Nativity. The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* states that "When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming. By celebrating the precursor's birth and martyrdom, the Church unites herself to [the Baptist's] desire: 'He must increase, but I must decrease'" (*CCC*, n. 524).

Advent – A Time of Waiting, Conversion, and Hope

After the Fall of Adam, God told Satan that, one day, the seed of a woman would crush the serpent's head, which is known as the protoevangelium, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; they will strike at your head, while you strike at their heel" (Gen 3:15). This first prophecy of the Messiah, found in the Old Testament, is a glimmer of the glad tidings of salvation and the reference to the offspring (or seed of the woman) is to Christ being born of the Virgin Mary as well as to that Child being one Person who unites two natures because Jesus Christ is both fully human and divine. Then, from that point until the first coming in Bethlehem, Israel's long period of expectation and anticipation began. Today, as was true for Israel, now that the Messiah has been born, the Church is similarly situated as the Israelites were in terms of Christ's Second Coming – we are living in exile from our true homeland and do so while waiting, hoping, and longing for Christ to return. During Advent, the Church looks back to Bethlehem and, simultaneously, looks forward to the ultimate advent when God's kingdom

will arrive in all its fullness. Popular thinking is that Advent is just the preliminary warm-up to Christmas and the Savior's Birth. However, the season's twofold emphasis implies that only among the shadows and bursts of light that Advent casts—hence, only by its proper observance can the miracle of Christmas be fully appreciated. And, then, only in the light of the Word-made-flesh (or Incarnation) does the Christian way of living bear its proper fruit. Between the Father's promise fulfilled that He would send the world a Savior and the hope-filled search for another promise which remains unfulfilled that Christ will come again, that reality constitutes the present situation of the Church living between the already (First Coming) and the not yet (Christ's return in glory)!

Advent and the Parousia – Christ's Second Coming

Often overlooked in the two-fold nature of Advent is its end-time focus on Christ's return in glory. Since the exact date of the final day of human history remains indeterminate, planning and being prepared for whenever Christ returns in glory is fused with the length of the individual lives we have been given. When the prospect of death becomes a reality, from the moment we depart this life, repentance of sin is no longer possible and no further increase in grace-filled acts can possibly be achieved – even sacraments are ineffective for those who have died. Thus, our fate at the Last Judgment is determined not when Christ comes again, but by the particular or individual judgment which is predicated upon how well we have lived the lives that are ours now and lived them in accord with Christ's commands. From the earliest persecutions of the Church by the Roman emperors to genocidal crimes in more recent centuries, those tragedies prefigure the *Parousia* and serve as a graphic reminder of the end times. Such monstrous crimes, when recognized for what they are, constitute a foretaste of the cataclysmic features of the final days of human history. Having survived human tragedies of many kinds, individually or as the Church, the end of our lives or the end of the world itself is less likely to be less horrifying. As Dante wrote, "The arrow we see coming is half spent" (*Paradiso* XVII, 27) which means that because Christ has forewarned us about the inevitable end and its signs or conditions – persecution, apostasy, the Antichrist and more – such a revelation will allow the faithful to endure the present, more immediate challenges to faith in Christ. The Lord's First and Second Comings, then, are intertwined, as Cardinal Daniélou wrote, "First of all, it means that the Last Things have already begun. The resurrection of Christ is presented as the first and decisive act of the last day. The Word of God took humanity to himself in the Incarnation, and cleansed it through his precious blood, and brought it into his Father's house forever at his ascension. The work of salvation has been substantially done, everything essential has been secured already..." (*The Lord of History*. Ch. 8 Notions of Eschatology). The eschaton or the culmination of time and history has its focus in the Kingdom that Christ established which is Christ Himself and from Pentecost until the *Parousia* that same Kingdom is found in the Church, as Christ's mystical body. Yet, it is preferable to speak not of eschaton in the singular, but *eschata* (pl), which are the limits or outside margins of salvation history. Those sufferings must be endured and true freedom is gained by the redeemed crossing through them, though these limits are kept from being recognizable. Maranatha—Come, Lord Jesus!