

**OUR LADY OF PROVIDENCE CHAPEL**  
**SAINT VINCENT HOSPITAL**  
**WORCESTER MEDICAL CENTER**  
**Second Sunday of Advent**  
**December 8, 2024**

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

## MASS INTENTIONS — LITURGICAL SCHEDULE

Saturday December 7 *Vigil of the 2nd Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm +Armand Barrette

Sunday, December 8 *Second Sunday of Advent*

7:30am For a special intention

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

Monday, December 9 *Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary*

12:00nn +Deceased members of the Ceste & McCorry families

4:00pm In gratitude to God for the sinless Virgin Mary

Tuesday, December 10

12:00nn For the noble intentions of Paul

Wednesday, December 11 *Saint Damasus I, pope*<sup>2</sup>

12:00nn +Father Dennis Conway

Thursday, December 12 *Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe*

12:00nn For the intentions of the Mesite family

Friday, December 13 *Saint Lucy, virgin & martyr*<sup>1</sup>

12:00nn For the eyes of faith

Saturday, December 14 *Vigil of the 3rd Sunday of Advent*

4:00pm For increased joy as Christmas draws near

Sunday, December 15 *Gaudete Sunday: Third Sunday of Advent*

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

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

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

John the Baptist and his message is the focus of the Second and Third Sundays of Advent. Besides the biblical evidence, much of what we know about the Baptist comes from extra-biblical sources, like the Jewish historian, Titus Flavius Josephus, born Yosef ben Matityahu. Writing toward the end of the first century of the Christian Era (ca. 94 AD) about the death of John the Baptist at the hands of Herod Antipas, the ruler of Galilee, he remarks about John, "He was a good man and had exhorted the Jews to lead righteous lives, to practice justice towards their fellows and piety towards God, and so doing join in baptism. . ." (Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 18.5.2). Josephus was only interested in John because he was part of the story of Herod Antipas, the ruler in Galilee, who saw him as a threat. Likewise, the evangelists include John in their gospels because of the role he had in the life of Jesus. This weekend's Gospel begins with a long historical introduction and frames the Baptist's prophetic call in a manner that is similar to the call of the major prophets of Israel. Saint Luke lengthens the citation from the prophet Isaiah (Is 40:3-5). In its original setting, Isaiah prophesied about the return of the exiles from Babylon to Jerusalem or Zion. The route they were destined to take was determined by Yahweh who would lead them. Thus, their way back from exile lies straight across the wilderness rather than along the well-watered routes usually followed from Mesopotamia to Israel. The Synoptic gospels adapt that oracle to describe the witness of John the Baptist in regard to Jesus as an explanation for John's "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." Destined to "prepare the way of the Lord" and to "make straight his paths," the Isaian citation does not specify for whom the divine agent must straighten out those crooked paths. Though nameless, this unknown individual is at the heart of all that is described in the oracle and not John or the Precursor. The anonymous agent of God will not only make himself known but will also bring about "The salvation of God" which will be the fulfillment of the prophetic utterances throughout the prior eon. Jesus was born at a specific time in human history, given unique authority He miraculously cast out demons and healed the sick. As the embodiment of the glad tidings of salvation, Jesus proclaimed the good news that the long-promised salvation was finally at

## **Agnus Dei, qui tollis peccata mundi, dona nobis pacem**

The prophet Isaiah compares the Messiah, the long-awaited Savior, to a lamb. Rejected, he bears the sins of his people and, through his self-giving life, renews the covenant with God. By designating Jesus as "the Lamb of God," John the Baptist recognizes in Jesus the answer to the people of Israel's expectations. He is the awaited Messiah who acts in the name of God and through the Father's divine powers. It is a paradoxical power, for it is through his self-sacrifice that He will bring about the expected purification and renewal of those who believe Him to be God's Lamb.

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hand. Dying and rising, He was seated at the Father's right hand and from there He will come again to judge the living and the dead. The Nicene Creed makes these biblical intimations explicit and the memorial aspect of the Eucharist recalls and makes present what happened long ago. As the forerunner, John the Baptist redirects the attention away from himself and toward the mystery of salvation in and by Christ, the Messiah and Savior. John's message is oriented to the first of the Lord's two-fold manifestation. The Messiah's coming, though, had been illustrated by other witnesses and incidents, such as the Annunciations to both Mary and Joseph by an angel, the testimony of Simeon and Anna in the Temple and the revelation to the shepherds in Bethlehem. All deepen the mystery. In these varied announcements, the same underlying revelation is extant – the coming or advent of the world's Savior. The coming of the Lord is universal because it concerns "the salvation of the whole world." Yet, as glorious as the Savior's coming promised to be, at the same time, that coming will also manifest the glory of God the Father. As the first to hear of the Savior's birth, the shepherds are overshadowed by the Father's glory and, after seeing the Child of Bethlehem, they glorified God and gave Him fitting praise. When at the Annunciation, Gabriel told Mary of her singular privilege, the angel also said that her Child would "be great and...called the Son of the Most High...and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever..." (Lk 1:32-33), which implies that there would be another or second coming of the Most High upon the earth. Like His coming in Bethlehem, the Lord's Second Coming or parousia demands being vigilant and to be *semper paratus* or to always ready for the Day of the Lord.

### **Maranatha: Longing & Vision for the Advent Season**

The verbal expression come (Lat. *veni*) is used in many Advent hymns and in the brief prayer "Come, Lord Jesus" (Rev 22:20). Its Aramaic equivalent Maranatha, the Semitic dialect spoken by Jesus, appears in the Bible only once (1 Cor 16:22). Some bibles translate that word into English (NIV, RSV, NKJV), whereas others (NABRE, KJV, NASB) simply use the word maranatha, with no translation. It is a compound word or a combination of two words "marana – tha" that literally mean "the Lord comes" or in the imperative case "Come, Lord!" Thus, the exact meaning depends on how maranatha should be divided into those two words: either *māran āthā* (Come, Lord) or *māranā thā* (Our Lord, come). It was often transliterated from Aramaic into Greek letters rather than translated and, given the nature of early manuscripts, the lexical difficulty rests in determining just which two Aramaic words constitute the single Greek expression. The phrase reflects the eschatological hope that was central to early Christianity, highlighting the expectation of Christ's imminent return to establish His kingdom. The expression "Maranatha!" also was a key watchword and prayer among the early Christians. In the beginning, maranatha was seen as implying "Come, Lord" and it constituted a regular prayer throughout the year, but especially during weekly celebration of the Lord's Supper or Eucharist. The mid or late first-century work known as the Didache was an early Christian manual that included the following prayer and admonition for the weekly celebration, "May your grace come and may this world pass away. Hosanna to the God of David! If anyone is holy, let him approach [the Lord's Supper/Eucharist]. If anyone is not, let him repent. Maranatha! Amen" *Didache* 10,6. Saint Paul the Apostle used this Aramaic word at the end of his First Letter to the Corinthians or "Come, Lord!" His use of the expression has generated much interest and speculation as to its meaning and why Paul used it. It could also be considered both a prayer of petition and confession of faith. If it is seen as Maran atha or "Our Lord come, it becomes a creedal declaration. The former interpretation is supported by what appears to be a Greek equivalent of this acclamation in Book of Revelation 22:20 "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!" Maranatha – come, Lord Jesus – is the longing and the vision for the season of Advent. The Church professes that mystery of faith at every Mass, "We proclaim your Death, O Lord, and profess your Resurrection, until you come again. Use this expression during the remaining days of the Advent season. Remember that the word "advent" comes from the Latin word "adventus" which literally means the "coming" or the "arrival" of someone or something. Nonetheless, this desire for the Lord to come is central to belief and hope, especially in our celebration of the Eucharist. He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

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## Advent & Eschatology - A Time of Waiting & Arrival

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On December 17 the Church inaugurates the second part of Advent, in which her focus is more intensely on the immediate preparation for the Feast of the Lord's Nativity. In the *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year & Calendar (UNLYC)*, the second-half of Advent is described this way, "The weekdays from December 17 up to and including December 24 are ordered in a more direct way to preparing for the Nativity of the Lord" (*UNLYC*, n. 42). The medieval work the *Golden Legend* refers to Advent as a "Time of Reconciliation" and it is a collection of 153 hagiographies that was widely read in Europe during the Late Middle Ages: "The Lord's advent is celebrated for four weeks to signify that his coming is fourfold: He came to us in the flesh, he comes into our hearts, he comes to us at death, and he will come to judge us." The author of the *Legenda aurea* Jacobus da Voragine also added, "Before the coming of God in the flesh, we were ignorant, subject to eternal punishment, slaves of the Devil, shackled with our sinful habits, lost in darkness, exiled from our true country. Hence the ancient [O] antiphons announce Jesus in turn as our Teacher, our Redeemer, our Liberator, our Guide, our Enlightener and our Savior"

### Late Advent – O Antiphons

An antiphon is a verse, usually from Scripture that is used as a refrain or as a repeated line, in prayer or song. In Christian prayer, antiphons frame texts from the Psalms. They function as a focus for the reader's attention and draw out important themes in a given psalm or prayer. Antiphons are used in the Roman Missal for the Entrance Antiphon and the Communion Antiphon. They are also used in the Liturgy of the Hours, typically for Lauds or Vespers. The introductory O in these antiphons is vocative in nature such that it is derived from the Latin *vocare* and is used in addressing or invoking a person or thing; hence, to call. Each individual text of these seven antiphons is a cry, an invocation, welling up from humanity's desire for God. Moreover the texts themselves include hints and glimmers of God's desire for humanity. Each one calls upon God – most urgently upon Jesus, God the Son, the second person of the Holy Trinity – to draw closer to us, to guide us, to lead us, and to save us. When taken together, the O Antiphons offer an account of how God, by taking action in history, whether in our lives or at the end of time, does exactly what these prayers ask the Lord God to do: He comes to us, dwells with us, invites us into His own life, and sets us free. Starting in our existential response to the mystery of creation, and leading through a recapitulation of salvation history, the antiphons culminate with the feast of Christmas, when Jesus answers our prayer by coming to earth as a Child. By living a fully human life on earth and finally by allowing Himself to be handed over to death for our

salvation, yet, only to rise again from the dead.

### The Liturgy of the Word in Late Advent

In these last eight days of Advent, in the selected Gospel passages, the Church reads exclusively from the Infancy Narratives found in the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke. In *Jesus of Nazareth: The Infancy Narratives*, Pope Benedict presents the account of the Lord's Nativity not as merely an event in the past, but as an event of "unfolding significance" for people today. The book includes reflections on such matters as the significance of the Virgin Birth and the way nature was perceived in ancient pagan and Judeo-Christian cultures. The papal author examines the birth and childhood of Jesus as recounted in two of the three Synoptic Gospels. The series of late Advent Gospel readings begins with the genealogy of Christ, the visits of the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, Mary, and Joseph. So, the Church pauses to ponder the Word of God and the Child's humble human origins in order to prepare for the beauty and wonder of the holy night and the Christ Child's saving birth at Bethlehem. The Old Testament prophecies proclaimed in the First Reading are chosen to correspond to those Gospels. From Genesis you hear Jacob blessing the tribe of Judah – "You, Judah, shall your brothers praise... The scepter shall never depart from Judah." Jacob prophesied that Judah was where the Messiah would be born. The prophet Jeremiah assures Israel that the coming King will restore justice to the land—"this is the name they will give him: The Lord our justice." The angelic pronouncement of the birth of Samson recalls how God worked in salvation history through sending the gift of a son to a barren woman and to His faithful people. The prophets Isaiah and Malachi speak of the Lord eventually answering the people's longing in the figures of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist. And the Lord's promise to King David is proclaimed to us on the morning before the solemn night when the whole world goes to adore the Child in Bethlehem: "Your throne shall stand firm forever." The Psalms of late Advent include some of the great messianic psalms. Psalm 72 prays that the coming King will establish justice and be acclaimed by all the nations, while Psalm 89 rejoices in the Lord's promises to David. Psalm 24 is the great psalm acclaiming the Lord as He enters into the temple: "O gates lift high your heads, let the Lord enter; he is the king of glory!" In a similar vein, Jesus' words in the Gospel of Luke 21:28 are repeated as an antiphon in the liturgy during these expectant days: "Lift up your heads and see; your redemption is near at hand." Maranatha—Come Lord Jesus.

[www.ascensionpress.com](http://www.ascensionpress.com). Fr. Mitchell. "Praying with Scripture During the Last Days of Advent." 18 December 2023. [www.ctsbooks.org](http://www.ctsbooks.org). Katy Carl. "What Are the O Antiphons?" 13 December 2023.

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