

12-2007

# Lectionary-based Bible Study Program

Mary John Trevino

*University of the Incarnate Word*

Follow this and additional works at: [https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw\\_pastoral](https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_pastoral)



Part of the [Practical Theology Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Trevino, Mary John, "Lectionary-based Bible Study Program" (2007). *Pastoral Institute*. 11.  
[https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw\\_pastoral/11](https://athenaeum.uiw.edu/uiw_pastoral/11)

This Project is brought to you for free and open access by The Athenaeum. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Institute by an authorized administrator of The Athenaeum. For more information, please contact [athenaeum@uiwtx.edu](mailto:athenaeum@uiwtx.edu).

Lectionary-based Bible Study Program

A Pastoral Project  
Presented to the Pastoral Institute,  
University of the Incarnate Word,  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Religious Studies

by

Sister Mary John Trevino, M.C.D.P, B.A.

Approved by:

*Dr. Eilish Ryan, CCVI, Th.D.*  
Dr. Eilish Ryan, CCVI, Th.D.  
Faculty Advisor

Date: *December 1, 2007*

This Final Project and Paper  
is lovingly dedicated  
to my Mentor and friend  
Sister Rosita G. Lopez, M.C.D.P.  
Whose love, patience and guidance  
made this milestone possible.

## **My Theology of Church and Ministry**

Church can mean many things to many people. For me, church is the People of God traveling together through this life, helping and supporting each other in the here and not yet until we become one with the eternal Trinity. The church as sacrament shows us that we are in this journey together. Avery Dulles' commentary, "The Ecclesiology of John Paul II" in *The Gift of the Church*, has this to say: "In the end Jesus Christ, who is head of the Church and of all creation, will bring about a fulfillment in which both Church and world will find their glorious consummation." Given the example of Jesus, our model of compassion, love and caring that turned the world inside out, we need one another to give and receive help and encouragement so that no one gets left behind. As a group of like-minded people with similar experiences and heavenly goals, we bless and are blessed by our friendships in many ways. Friendships coupled with grace helps to reduce fears, trials, and discouragement to spur us on to get over the next hill and try harder when we must. Confrontation, when it is necessary, is a blessing when done with love and for each other's good. It can bring about a potential for change that at one time or another makes us better people and more Christ like.

The church is a community of individuals who are seeking to live life as Jesus did by trying to become their best selves. Jesus was a person who was compassionate, loving and non-judgmental. People felt safe in his presence as he conversed with and touched them, sometimes physically, sometimes spiritually and sometimes both. They were moved by the way he spoke with an authority they had not experienced before. It was the authority he received from God. Jesus came to be with sinners, lifted them up, and empowered them with his loving compassion



and respect so that they might experience the power of God in their miserable lives. He turned the religious, social and economic worlds up side down. Women were important to him. Tax collectors were worthy of his presence at table. The sick, poor, oppressed, lonely, possessed, outcast and prostitutes were showered with his respect, love and compassion so that they could grow in their love for God. The Church, like Jesus, must strive to live out of these same attitudes. The poor, the oppressed, in fact everyone needs to be treated with love and respect in order to share the life of the Trinity.

Just as Jesus was a good companion and example to those around him, those who minister in the church must try to be Christ for today's people. There are still social, economic, political and religious outcasts in our world, probably more types than ever before. How will we treat the drug addict, thief, murderer, rapist, dissident, terrorist, embezzler, liar, fornicator, alien, the conceited, the abortionist, the poor and the marginalized? Will it be with the same respect, love and compassion of God seen in Jesus? The minister tries to live up to the ideal and example, of Jesus. The job of the minister is to do and act as Jesus did and create an atmosphere where change is possible with God's help.

All ministry has the same vision but it is shown in many ways. "Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. God has appointed in the Church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers," as the apostle Paul tells us in 1Cor 12:27. Teachers, I believe, are like the farmer who one day went to sow seeds in the field (Mk 4:3ff, Mt 13:3ff, Lk 8:5). They work at sowing the seeds of knowledge, the knowledge of the coming of the Kingdom of God. Their job is to "earth" the Gospel, which is to give the Word of God - to proclaim, as Gerald A. Arbuckle states in *Earthing the Gospel*. Just as the sower knows that some seeds will land on trodden paths, among weeds, on rocks and gravel, by the wayside and most of it on fertile soil

so too with teachers. Their words, advice, lessons and teachings can fall on deaf ears, those that walk away and those that forget or get tired of doing what they have heard. But there are the ones who take the seeds of knowledge and faith and not only run with it, but share the Word with everyone they meet. They allow the Holy Spirit to shine through them and animate others to do the same.

This is what I would like to do. Give the students the seeds of the Gospel of Jesus Christ in order to animate them to long for and work toward bringing about the Kingdom of God as Jesus did and continues to do so in every age. Teachers evangelize through their ministry of teaching. They work to offer the Good News of salvation to all believers “who have ears to hear” (Mk 4:9) in the name of Jesus.

## Bibliography

Arbuckle, Gerald A. *Earthing The Gospel*. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1990.

Phan, Peter C. ed. *The Gift of the Church*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2000.

## **Project Proposal**

1. I will be implementing my Pastoral Project with the parishioners and catechists at St. Bonaventure Catholic Church. During my site visit for my Program Planning for Adult Education class, Sister Mary T. Phalen asked if I would consider a Bible Study Class in English for my project because the people had been asking for this type of class for the past three to four years. The parish has many opportunities for the Spanish speaking community, but the need for the English track was very evident.

Some obstacles that I suspect may come up, since it will be my first time working with this population, is that I may start on too low or too high a level. I will be able to assess this on the first day of class and need to revamp the timeline in order to meet the needs of the people. I may also find, because of their low economic status, they cannot afford Bibles. Sr. Mary T. has a few to lend out that belong to the parish. St. Andrew's Convent also has a few to lend, but I would prefer to find some that can be left in the hands of the participants.

2. The activities involved in the class are:

1. Preparing prayer services – See Appendix E
2. Reading Bible passages.
3. Having discussions in dyads, triads, or whole group.
4. Exposing to learners the Liturgical Cycle, Bible Dictionaries, Biblical Maps and Charts, Biblical Commentaries, Biblical Concordances, and Books of the Bible
5. Learning how to glean out life applications from biblical texts.

I want the learner to know what resources are available in order to help them understand what they are reading in the biblical text. When people understand what they read, they are better able to make life applications. It is my hope that the more they read about the life of Jesus the more they will build a stronger relationship with the God who loves them. This relationship can change their whole attitude, disposition, and make their faith stronger. Jesus becomes the model of their life and soon they become Jesus for others.

3. My focus group consists of:

1. Sister Mary T. Phelan, CCVI - Pastoral Associate
2. Monsignor Kevin Ryan - Pastor of St. Mark Evangelist Catholic Church -  
Biblical Consultant
3. Deacon Fidel Hinojosa - Deacon
4. Diane Guerra - Director of Religious Education
5. Sister Krysia Pillon, MCDP – Program Advisor
6. Mrs. Irene V. Garza - Student Advisor
7. Mrs. Connie K. Kuykendall - Student Advisor

Sister Mary T. Phalen is in charge of spiritual formation and many other parochial ministries and I will be under her direct supervision. Monsignor Kevin Ryan has made himself available to answer questions I am not qualified to answer. I wanted to include Deacon Fidel Hinojosa because he has been there for seventeen years and has already built a relationship with the people of the parish and he has a working knowledge of their needs. I then included the Director of Religious Education because some of the catechists are going to take the class. She has been there for many years and knows this population well. I chose Sr. Krysia because she has the gift

of being very methodical and keeping to the point. Irene Garza and Connie Kuykendall will act in the capacity of Student Advisors so that the activities are appropriate for adult learners.

4. The need for the Bible study class was discovered during my site visit to St. Bonaventure. This was a requirement for my Program Planning for Adult Education class in the spring semester of 2006. She stated that there were many classes in Spanish but the English speakers had been asking for a Bible study class in English. She thought this would be a good opportunity to get a class started.

5. I put together goals, objectives, time lines, schedules, and activities and presented the whole process to them in order to get feedback. They thought it was good enough to start with and I could make adjustments along the way.

6. The goals of the project are that the student will be able to:

1. Prepare simple prayer services.
2. Read the Bible and learn to interpret its lessons and apply it to life.
3. Understand better the Church's liturgical cycle.
4. Learn songs that complement biblical texts and ideas in order to reinforce its concepts of salvation history.
5. Express themselves and biblical concepts in various art forms. (e.g.

drawing, journal writing, mandalas)

7. As stated previously, the goals will be practiced during each class. I will use the same process but use each Sunday's readings as stated in Appendix B. My role will be to instruct the students by demonstrating the process, explaining what they don't understand and showing them the resources used to bring clarity to their understanding.

8. Knowledge of the Bible, its concepts, origins, and stories of God's action in our lives is

necessary to teach a Bible Study Class. As a religious, I have had the opportunities to study the Bible and various courses on religion. I have participated in the University of the Incarnate Word's Pastoral Institute. I will use various resources as guides and clarifiers such as Biblical commentaries, maps, charts, and Dictionaries. Monsignor Ryan will serve as biblical consultant.

9. The skills I need to accomplish this project are:

1. Organizational Skills:

- a. Develop a timeline – see Appendix B
- b. Set schedules – See Appendix C
- c. Work with groups in various ways
- d. Have material resources ready and available – See Appendix D
- e. Be flexible, yet have structure
- f. Be knowledgeable concerning material presented

2. Relationship Skills.

- a. Build rapport with students
- b. Be mindful of students frustrations, feelings, concerns
- c. Be available and patient
- d. Be prayerful and create a safe and relaxed atmosphere
- e. Use various learning styles in order to reach all students.

3. Fine Arts

- a. Music – teach songs and accompany
- b. Art – teach basic concepts and encourage participation
- c. Journal Writing

10. The attitudes I need to accomplish this project are to be mindful of the needs and capabilities of adult learners, to act as a facilitator for their learning, to expose students to resources that are available to them in their community, to realize that each student progresses at their own pace and that patience is needed to build the community of faith especially when the fruits of your labor blossom in the future. There must also be the attitude of celebrating diversity and incorporating their gifts into the class.

Again, these attitudes have been formed through prior teaching experience. More importantly, it helps if the students can see Jesus in their teacher. If the teacher can be respectful and loving, the students will feel safe, comfortable and willing to learn. Adults are more self-motivated in their learning process and ask questions that lead to areas they wish to know more about. Laughter and having fun go a long way to achieving the same goals.

As a facilitator, I will need to create an atmosphere of learning for each student, manage time, provide appropriate feedback, and make available opportunities for each student to have a voice. These attitudes will be developed through continued practice within the class.

11. Involving other staff is built into the program since there are approximately eleven catechists who have signed up. It is my hope that they especially will continue in their search for God so that they will continue to develop their relationship with God and transfer their newly acquired knowledge to their students. I have also made a commitment to continue the Bible Study Class until the end of May. By that time maybe the deacon or one of the catechists that I have observed already will run with the program. It may even turn out that a leader within the group, whom I least expect, will become enthusiastic enough to keep the Bible Study class alive and productive.

My goal is always to develop leaders and make the class as independent as possible. The



Missionary Catechists of Divine Providence, to which congregation I belong, has always made it a point to encourage the formation of parochial leaders and work ourselves out of a job in a manner of speaking. It has been our consistent contribution to the Church and the world.

12. Some personal learning goals that I have are to understand and be able to facilitate learning in the adult population with more expertise. I want to enjoy the enthusiasm and love of learning in adults as I have experienced it with children over the past thirty years of my teaching career. I want to be present to these adult learners at their graced moments when God touches them and love grows or when hurts are healed and God is glorified. My professional goals are to become more keenly aware of the learning process of adults so that I can become a more creative and motivating facilitator.

The knowledge I need to obtain from this Bible Study Group is to assess what level they are on in their religions study quest. I hope to obtain a clearer picture on the first day of class when I state the goals and objectives of the Bible Study course. I will also ask questions to assess their knowledge bank and meet them where they are.

13. The expertise that I want Sister Mary Phalen to share with me has already happened. She has shared the vision the Parish has for the community of St. Bonaventure. She has put her trust in me to provide the best ministry to the parishioners in my class who reside under her care. I would want her to be available if a problem arises, so that with her expertise she can provide a solution if necessary.

## **Project Evaluation**

### **Section 1: Focus Group**

The focus group for this Bible Series on the Gospel of Mark helped me to get to know the needs of the Parish in a relatively short time. Both the pastor, Father Raymond, and the pastoral associate, Sister Mary T. Phelan, stated that the people had been requesting this class for a long time. Although a bible class for the Spanish speaking was available, there was not one in English.

Father Raymond blessed the teacher, students and bibles on the first day of class and came to greet the class on occasion.

Sister Mary was very helpful because she knew the people well. She attended classes when she could and was able to share her ideas with the students as well.

Monsignor Kevin Ryan was of great help whenever I called him on items of Christology, Church, Morality and Historical Data. Although he could not join us, nevertheless, he was only a phone call away.

Deacon Fidel Hinojosa filled me in as to the character of the parishioners but, because of his busy schedule, subsequently was not able to join us.

Sister Krysia Pilon, MCDP acted as my program consultant to make sure there was continuity and sometimes made suggestions for a few of the activities. The Art Quilt was her idea.

Both Mrs. Irene Garza and Mrs. Connie Kuykendall went over my lesson plans to make sure they would be both informative and interesting to adult learners. They were not able to

attend the classes but we were in constant communication so that we could review the lesson of the day and discuss the following weeks work.

## **Section 2: Goals Accomplished**

*The goals of the project are that the student will be able to:*

### *1. Prepare simple prayer services.*

I began to develop the students' prayer life with very simple prayer services at the beginning of each class. I slowly added to it so that by the second half of the bible series we were praying an abbreviated form of the Liturgy of the Hours. Different students would volunteer to do a reading, pray the petitions or say the closing prayer. By Thanksgiving, the group of catechists that attended led the prayer service. Many of the participants came straight from work and did not have time to prepare one. They did however want to close the class with spontaneous prayer.

### *2. Read the Bible and learn to interpret its lessons and apply it to life.*

The students learned the organization and layout of the Bible and were quite adept at finding both Hebrew and New Testament passages. They often commented how they never had taken the time to learn this skill and were so pleased when they could find passages more quickly.

Some would say that now the readings made more sense to them. Others commented that they know why these particular readings are chosen for the various liturgical seasons. One of the students who is also a Lector on Sundays commented that she is now able to proclaim the readings more intelligently and with greater confidence.

I could see the group bonding and building community. I thought they had previously known each other well but I learned later that their relationships had blossomed in the class.

The students had felt comfortable enough to share their faith experience on a very deep level. It was beautiful to see how the Holy Spirit works in the lives of the Faithful. Some shared how the class had changed some of their attitudes for the better.

3. *Understand better the Church's Liturgical cycle.*

The Liturgical Cycle was introduced at the beginning of the Bible Series along with an explanation of the liturgical Seasons, colors of vestments, symbols, and the moods and lessons of the readings excite. We started with Ordinary Time, moved into Thanksgiving and finished with the Advent season.

4. *Learn songs that complement biblical texts and ideas in order to reinforce its concepts of salvation history.*

The students became familiar with the following hymns:

A. *Psalm 19: Lord, You Have the Words*, David Hass

B. *When Love Is Found*, Martin West

C. *Blest Are They*, David Hass

D. *Bread for the World*, Bernadette Farrel

E. *Open My Eyes*, Jesse Manibussen

F. *Psalm 23: Shepherd Me, O God*, Marty Haugen

G. *Psalm 34: The Cry of the Poor*, John Foley, SJ

H. *Table of Plenty*, Dan L. Shutte

I. *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*, Neal and Helmore

J. *Buenos Días, Paloma Blanca*, Traditional

5. *Express themselves and biblical concepts in various art forms. (e.g. drawing, journal writing, mandalas)*

The last five to ten minutes of the class was dedicated to journal writing and every third or fourth week they would be encouraged to draw what they had learned during the previous weeks. This was the hardest thing for them to do because they did not see themselves as artists. Some of their work is in the Art section of this report and is very good.

### **Section 3: Knowledge Gained**

It was not very difficult for me to get the knowledge I needed to complete this capstone project because I am a teacher already. I did, however, take the class Program Planning and Evaluation that proved to be invaluable to me especially in the planning of the Bible Series.

Since this is the first time I have taught adults a Bible Class there were times that I had to adjust along the way. For instance, I did not have a sign-in sheet the first day so that I could keep tabs on how many hours they had attended so that I could include it on their Certificates.

Further into the classes there were things they wanted to know in greater detail, so I designed handouts to give them further reading. Later, they would ask questions about it in subsequent classes. Before I started subsequent classes I made sure to have handouts on Liturgical Seasons and vocabulary, like Advent, Advent Wreath Blessings, and the Jesse Tree. I assumed nothing from that moment on.

### **Section 4: Skills Toned**

Teachers already have a bag of skills in order to teach. The most important one is that of daily observation and adjusting to the needs and wants of the students. There is always the skill and virtue of respecting each person and using many modes of teaching so that all the students

can be reached. Some students have to talk it out. Some are kinesthetic learners and have to move or manipulate materials. Still others are auditory, visual or both. Implementing a variety of presentation styles in addition to providing different activities created the platform for maximum learning to occur.

### **Section 5: Attitudes Developed**

Some important attitudes to possess and develop are that one person cannot know everything and when it comes to religion and the Church, the truth is that it always remains a mystery. But, the Holy Spirit is always at work in our world and when we don't get in the way wonderful things can take place in the hearts and minds of humans.

Another attitude of significance is to realize that we are all on the same journey to God but we are in different stages of spiritual maturity. Our ministry is to help others reach the goal of the Kingdom of God and become what God wants them to be -- their best self with the ability to reflect him/her. We, in the role of teacher, must have Jesus as our model so that students will feel safe in our presence and develop a love of learning. Adults especially take learning very seriously and are more self-motivated. We are there to facilitate, support and guide the student.

Other helpful attitudes are to be mindful of students' capabilities, diversity, and gifts. Developing their natural gifts for leadership is essential to the very life of the Church and its ample opportunities for the ordered ministries of the laity.

As a teacher, I created an atmosphere where this learning can take place for each student. I strove to develop time management, give timely feedback and create opportunities for each student to strengthen their own voice. These aforementioned attitudes are necessary to the development of every student of every time and place. They are essential elements for learning and faith development.

## **Section 6: Obstacles**

The only obstacle that I encountered, which was not expected, was that the Director of Religious Education wanted more in-depth study of the material. The reality was that the students ranged from never having a bible class to having gone to conferences on religious training. Since Sister Mary T. had wanted the class to be lectionary-based and geared more to basic training and moving the heart I let her handle the DRE. Section 3 above states that I supplemented some of the lessons with handouts on various subjects. I also gave them some websites for further study.

## **Section 7: Pastoral Leadership Development**

The Bible Series showed the students that as they participated in the prayer services, the reading of scripture, faith-sharing, music, art, and fellowship they were also capable of continuing the class without the teacher. I think that with the experiences they shared the catechists could have continued the class on a year round basis.

Some of the catechists shared with me that they would take the lessons they had learned that week and adapted it to the level they taught. Sometimes after class they would brainstorm with each other to garner possibilities for the youth. They would even ask to borrow some of the symbols and bring them back the following week.

I learned that sometimes fear prevents people from doing something they love. But when it is modeled for them in a non-threatening way they gain confidence and say, "I can do that!"

## **Section 8: Personal Goals**

Some of the goals I have set for myself lie in three areas: professional, relational and creative. In the professional realm, I believe that teachers have to be very organized and have a

command of the information that will be shared with the students. Certain things have to be in place before a class even commences. Educators should have a timeline, schedule of the class, knowledge of working with groups of various sizes, have all materials ready for each class and finally have some flexibility within the structure of the day.

I tried to have everything in place before I began Bible classes. The involvement of the focus group was extremely helpful in understanding what type of people would be in the class. It gave me a more accurate picture so that I was able to tailor the class for them.

Another key professional factor was to be able to quickly assess learning and make adjustments along the way whether it was to re-teach, extend or challenge. Before I met the students, I was a little nervous because I did not know them personally. After a few days of direct observation, students told me, if not directly then indirectly, where they are. Sometimes this awareness came when I asked certain questions and the students are not able to answer. In order to be successful in maximizing learning, material should be presented in a way that touches all the learning styles of students.

Through my observations during the first few classes I was able to extend by giving extra handouts for further reading as well as share good websites for those who had access to computers. I lectured a little bit, and then they read, reflected and did some faith-sharing. Music was played very softly in the background.

The second goal included the use of relational skills. I wanted to build rapport with the students and be mindful of their frustrations, feelings and concerns. I wanted them to feel that I was available to them and have them experience my patience as a facilitator of their learning. Creating a safe and relaxed atmosphere was also important to me and for my students.



Sister Mary T. stated that the class was very successful because I took the time to make a personal call to them each week to remind them to come to Bible Study. The informal conversations that took place at this time were invaluable in building the relationship of teacher and student. Others commented that they liked the way I was courteous and gave time and attention to each student.

Since ambiance is important to me, music by David Kaufman would be playing before students entered the room. The smell of freshly brewed coffee was also in the air. There was always a prayer table in front of the room with symbols of the day's lesson in appropriate liturgical and seasonal colors. The students stated that they always looked forward to coming to class and were energized when they left. That's what the Word of the Lord can do.

As a Catechist, I have found that there are many ways to enrich lessons so that they can be remembered for a lifetime. Learning a song that reinforces a lesson is one of the best ways to accomplish this goal. When an instrument is used to accompany the song it sticks much better in the memory. Section 2 above lists some of the songs they learned. They were so good in trying to learn and sing new songs and on occasion asked for specific ones that especially touched their hearts.

The third part lies in the creative area. Art, in its many mediums, has the capability of reinforcing the same concepts because it uses the other side of the brain. It is an expressive form of knowledge and reaches in to touch the area of creativity. The more senses that are involved in the learning process the greater the retention of knowledge.

It was in art that I found the most resistance. It was as if they were playing years of tapes inside their heads that said they were no good at art. Judge for your selves if they are artists or not in Appendix A of this report.

In addition, I used Journal Writing as a tool not only to creatively reinforce the concepts I was teaching but also to help the student store their knowledge so that it could have an impact in their daily life. They were given journals to write down their reactions, frustrations, graced moments, problems, etc. without judgment. They would be the only ones to read what was in the deep recesses of their heart. This process had a very healing effect on some of the students.

I was touched by how much they trusted, respected and supported me. I learned so much from them. They shared stories within their groups about how God had changed their lives. I could see the gratefulness for grace in their tears as they shared with the whole class. Week after week, they grew in their faith as they grew to love this small community of seekers of the truth in the Holy Word of God. I thought they had known each other for a long time and it wasn't until the last day that I learned this was not so. They were even at the point of helping each other by painting a house or cutting the grass for one of the elders who couldn't manage that anymore. This is what genuine ministry is all about. It's the process by which Jesus is incarnated and experienced in our world today.

### **Section 9: Project Resource Person**

Sister Mary T. Phalen was most helpful by always being available to answer any questions I might have about the students, facility, way of handling the DRE, and keeping me up to speed on the needs of the people. She was also very supportive of my methods of teaching and felt free to add little tidbits of information when she thought the students might not know what I was saying. She made me feel welcome, wanted and appreciated.

### **Section 10: Project Responses**

I have had so much experience beforehand, in both teaching and ministry, that there was not much deviation from my theology of ministry as originally articulated. If I had done this

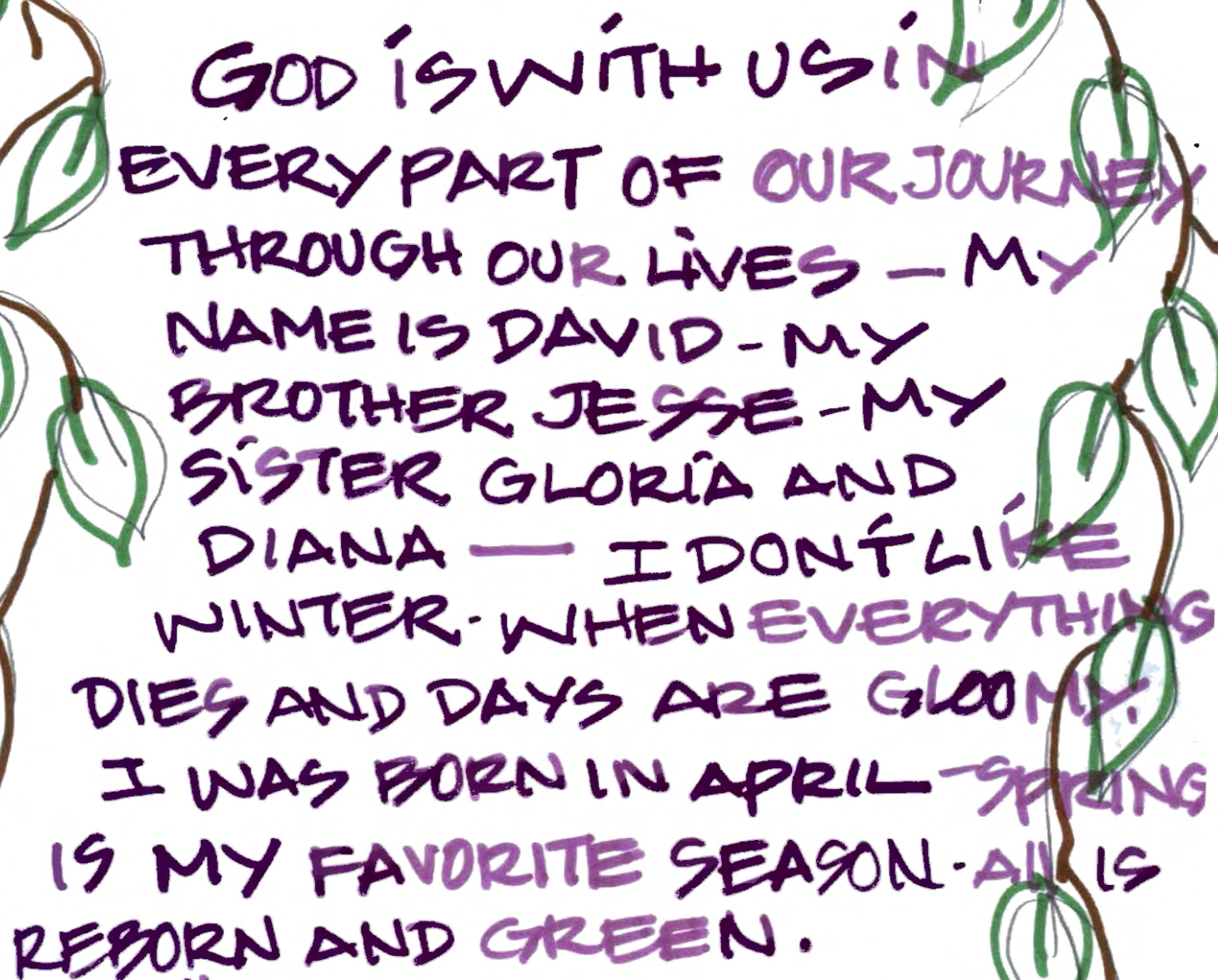
project in my twenties or early thirties it may have turned out different. But, when a person has had over thirty-six years of religious life it is hardly the case. Working as a teacher and a religious has brought me the experience of what it is to be Jesus to those in my care. That responsibility is not to be taken lightly. I have learned that the less of me there is and the more of the Incarnate Word, then and only then can the Reign of God be brought to life in the here and not yet. We are on this journey together and we help each other to the Way, the Truth, and the Life!

This project did affirm my belief that if people are given opportunities they will respond to God's grace. Students were asked in their evaluation of the class, "What has changed as a result of participation in this class?" Some of them wrote these comments:

1. God touched me very deeply through his Word – part of me was healed spiritually – that needed healing badly. All glory to God and Jesus our Savior.
2. The importance of knowing and reading my Bible in order to become a better Catholic, to know why we are Catholic, in order to love Jesus without limitations. Know God better and his Mother, the mother of all.
3. My understanding of how to read the Bible has truly made a difference in understanding several scriptures. Thank you.
4. To me I learned a lot. To understand and talk about our Bible.
5. Information was given to me that I did not know existed. Questions were answered. I was left with wanting more of this. Sister Mary John is very knowledgeable and very enthusiastic.
6. To know inside that not only God s depending on you but others too. That by choosing Bible Study you choose God over evil and his will is done by simple decisions like these. Also got to know people of St. Bonaventure – creating a beautiful bond and a feeling of togetherness. Thank you Sister Mary John and thank you God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit.
7. My attitude toward my brothers and sisters has surely changed. I see everyone now and I look for the good in them. I believe I have learned what true charity is.

8. I've learned to pass it on to my wife and children and also to some of my co-workers.
9. I have felt a need to set apart time to study and renew my spiritual faith.
10. You asked if we used and of what we have learned. Yes, as a teacher of fourth graders I used most of the material and knowledge to prepare my class for Sunday. Thank you very much.

Now I have come full circle. Teachers are given the gift to teach for the good of the whole Church. And Jesus Christ is the best Teacher of all. It is through his example of love, forgiveness and encouragement to be better that we teachers want to teach and most students are willing to learn. As teachers we go about spreading the seeds of truth, faith and love. It is not our job to worry about the harvest for Jesus Christ has taken care of it. Now the hope is that the circles of knowledge and love will grow ever wider until all things are brought together to the glory of God in Christ.



GOD IS WITH US IN  
EVERY PART OF OUR JOURNEY  
THROUGH OUR LIVES — MY  
NAME IS DAVID — MY  
BROTHER JESSE — MY  
SISTER GLORIA AND  
DIANA — I DON'T LIKE  
WINTER. WHEN EVERYTHING  
DIES AND DAYS ARE GLOOMY.  
I WAS BORN IN APRIL — SPRING  
IS MY FAVORITE SEASON. ALL IS  
REBORN AND GREEN.

— "GOD IS THE VINE  
WE ARE THE BRANCHES"  
MY MOTHER'S NAME IS MARY  
MY DAD PASSED AWAY 2 YRS  
AGO HIS IS CRUZ. WE ARE  
ALL CONNECTED.

DAVID G. MORENO





MASTER:

That I May  
See!



BERTA V. SALINAS

The Great  
II Am



RICHARD A. IBARRA 12/14/06

I'VE LEARNED THAT JESUS CHRIST  
DIED FOR SINS. HE DID NOT COME  
TOO EARTH TO JUDGE BUT TO  
SAVE OUR POOR SOULS. ALSO THAT  
HE EVERYTHING THAT NEED, THAT  
THERE IS NOTHING ON THIS EARTH  
THAT CAN SATISFY ME NOT  
MONEY, GOLD, SILVER, OR  
MATERIAL THINGS. JESUS CHRIST  
IS MY LIFE MY SOUL AND  
MY STRENGTH.





ROCKY CHAVEZ 06'



# Bible Study Class

Cynthia

Frances

Antonia

Diane

Alma  
and  
Baby To come

Rosemary

Sister Mary

Rocky

Rachel

Bertha

Richard

Sister Mary John

David

John

## The Image of

## The Holy Spirit

Guadalupe

Susan

Feliciano

Diane Guerra

✓ September 15 de Septiembre

✓ fiestas patrias

✓ Kin's nuestro ✓

✓ Grito de Independencia

Padre ✓

Nine nuestro Padre

✓ Miguel Hidalgo y Costilla 1810 ✓

✓ ✓ October Halloween ✓ ✓

✓ No

✓ Poison Candy

Halloween lefty  
for children

✓ No Poison Candy



John Lentz

~~To Sister Mary John~~

Having you come to us  
to enlighten us with the word  
of "God" has truly been a  
Blessing to all of us. I am  
having trouble finding words  
to really explain what you  
have put in my heart. You  
also brought our group to know  
it each other, that did not exist  
before. Thank you and may  
God continue to Bless you and  
keep you Safe. Helitane D.  
Camp

# Bible Study

Sister  
M T  
Phelan

A study of what  
God calls us to

.... right relationships

as in the Reading from

(Sept-28) James 5:1-6

Come now you rich, weep and wail  
over your impending miseries. Your  
wealth has rotted away, your clothes  
have become moth-eaten, your gold  
and silver have corroded, and that  
corrosion will be a testimony  
against you; it will devour  
your flesh like a fire .....

And this is God's Word...

Sister Mary T



Dear Sister Mary John,

When we first started the bible study I was very interested but a bit tense and maybe a bit too rigid. After the first class as we went on I learned that Our God has so much love for us and that He doesn't want us to be sad. We must have total trust in Him.. Let go and let Him and the Holy Spirit guide us. I realize now that He forgives us and He wants us to be happy and have joy especially when we pray and remember why He came to us in human form. And why He died and be sure that He will come again, for all of us.

What beautiful relationships we can have with our brothers & sisters. After all we've learned about our loving father it is easier for me to pray and forgive all those who hurt me or have hurt me. I thank you for being such a loving sister and for bringing your class to us. We will cherish our study with you always.

Love, hope & faith.

God bless you,

Raquel Campos

Dec. 14, 2006

Gundalupe Juarez

There is nothing stronger than the  
Power of GOD



THE HOLY BIBLE

The Omega  
and "GOD" the  
The Alpha

Thursday NIGHTS HAVE BROUGHT ME PEACE  
The Holy Bible has brought me COMFORT  
The Holy Bible BRINGS HAPPINESS and SUNSHINE  
into my LIFE. The Thursday classes along with  
The Bible has given me the tranquility like getting  
up on a beautiful morning on a spring day and  
seeing the wonders of a beautiful GOD.

I like Bible Study. The scripture  
readings are very powerful. It brings  
me tears. God gave himself for us

FRANCES



We start with prayer every week I go to Bible Study,  
Then prayer. It is very beautiful, the prayer sometimes  
brings me tears to my eyes.

Jesus gave all he had for us.  
The world goes around.

I believe in faith.

Spitfire

Testament

● New Testament

Promise

Fulfillment

Rosa Maria Gallegos



Psalm 138:1

I thank you, Lord, with  
all my heart; before the gods\*  
to you I sing.







Suzanne MacKinnon Dec 14 2001





## Timeline for Lectionary-based Bible Study Course

Date	Sunday	1 <sup>st</sup> Reading	Responsorial Psalm	2 <sup>nd</sup> Reading	Gospel
Lent Introduction and Overview					
February 22, 2007					
Feb 22	1 <sup>st</sup> Sunday of Lent	Genesis 2: 7-9; 3:1-7	Psalm 51: 3-4, 5-6, 12-13, 17	Romans 5: 12-19	Matthew 4: 1-11
Feb 27	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday Of Lent	Genesis 15: 5-12, 17-18	Psalm 27: 1, 7-8, 8-9, 13-14	Philippians 3: 17 - 4:1	Luke 9: 28b-36
Mar 8	3 <sup>rd</sup> Sunday Of Lent	Exodus 3: 1-8a, 13-15	Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 6-7, 8, 11	1 Corinthians 10: 1-6, 10-12	Luke 13: 1-9
Mar 15	4 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Of Lent	Joshua 5: 9a, 10-12	Psalm 34: 2-3, 4-5, 6-7	2 Corinthians 5: 17-21	Luke 15: 1-3, 11-32
Mar 22	5 <sup>th</sup> Sunday Of Lent	Isaiah 43: 16-21	Psalm 126: 1-2, 2-3, 4-5, 6	Philippians 3: 8-14	John 8: 1-11
Mar 29	Palm Sunday	Isaiah 50: 4-7	Psalm 22: 8-9, 17-18, 19-20, 23-24	Philippians 2: 6-11	Luke 22:14 - 23:56
Apr 3	Easter Vigil	Genesis 1: 1 - 2:2 Genesis 22: 1-18 Exodus 14: 15 - 15:1 Isaiah 54: 5-14 Isaiah 55: 1-11 Baruch 3: 9-15, 3:32 - 4:4 Ezekiel 36: 16-17a, 18-28		Romans 6: 3-11	Luke 24: 1-12
Apr 12	2 <sup>nd</sup> Sunday Of Easter	Acts 5: 12-16	Psalm 118: 2-4, 13-15, 22-24	Revelation 1: 9-11a, 12-13, 17-19	John 20: 19-31

## **Class Structure**

- 7:00 – 7:20** Class begins with a Prayer Service including a song.
- 7:20 – 7:40** Read 1<sup>st</sup> Reading & Responsorial Psalm  
- Discussion (In dyads and triads)
- 7:40 – 8:00** Read 2<sup>nd</sup> Reading (letters to communities) - (whole group)  
- Discuss / Ask questions  
- Give applications to life
- 8:00 – 8:15** Break
- 8:15 – 8:45** Lessons on St. Mark's Gospel, All Saint's/All Soul's Day,  
and Advent
- 8:45 – 9:00** Journal Writing / Art Project

# The Season of Advent

## Anticipation and Hope

Dennis Bratcher

◉The Colors of Advent ◉ The Spirit of Advent ◉Evergreens and The Advent Wreath  
◉Celebrating Advent ◉ An Advent Reflection

Advent is the beginning of the Church Year for most churches in the Western tradition. It begins on the fourth Sunday before Christmas Day, which is the Sunday nearest November 30, and ends on Christmas Eve (Dec 24). If Christmas Eve is a Sunday, it is counted as the fourth Sunday of Advent, with Christmas Eve proper beginning at sundown.

### The Colors of Advent

Historically, the primary sanctuary color of Advent is Purple. This is the color of penitence and fasting as well as the color of royalty to welcome the Advent of the King. Purple is still used in Catholic churches. The purple of Advent is also the color of suffering used during Lent and Holy Week. This points to an important connection between Jesus' birth and death. The nativity, the Incarnation, cannot be separated from the crucifixion. The purpose of Jesus' coming into the world, of the "Word made flesh" and dwelling among us, is to reveal God and His grace to the world through Jesus' life and teaching, but also through his suffering, death, and resurrection. To reflect this emphasis, originally Advent was a time of penitence and fasting, much as the Season of Lent and so shared the color of Lent.

In the four weeks of Advent the third Sunday came to be a time of rejoicing that the fasting was almost over (in some traditions it is called Gaudete Sunday, from the Latin word for "rejoice"). The shift from the purple of the Season to pink or rose for the third Sunday Advent candles reflected this lessening emphasis on penitence as attention turned more to celebration of the season.

In recent times, however, Advent has undergone a shift in emphasis, reflected in a change of colors used in many churches. Except in the Eastern churches, the penitential aspect of the Season has been almost totally replaced by an emphasis on hope and anticipation.

In many churches the third Sunday remains the Sunday of Joy marked by pink or rose. However, most Protestant churches now use blue to distinguish the Season of Advent from Lent. Royal Blue is sometimes used as a symbol of royalty. Some churches use Bright Blue to symbolize the night sky, the anticipation of the impending announcement of the King's coming, or to symbolize the waters of Genesis 1, the beginning of a new creation. Some churches, including some Catholic churches, use blue violet to preserve the traditional use of purple while providing a visual distinction between the purple or red violet of Lent.

With the shift to blue for Advent in most non-Catholic churches, there is also a tendency to move pink to the Fourth Sunday of Advent. It still remains associated with Joy, but is increasingly used as the climax of the Advent Season on the last Sunday before Christmas.

Red and Green are more secular colors of Christmas. Although they derive from older European practices of using evergreens and holly to symbolize ongoing life and hope that Christ's birth brings into a cold world, they are not used as liturgical colors during Advent since they have other uses in other parts of the church year (see Colors of the Church Year).

The word Advent means "coming" or "arrival." The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus the Christ in his First Advent, and the anticipation of the return of Christ the King in his Second Advent. Thus, Advent is far more than simply marking a 2,000 year old event in history. It is celebrating a truth about God, the revelation of God in Christ whereby all of creation might be reconciled to God. That is a process in which we now participate, and the consummation of which we anticipate. Scripture reading for Advent will reflect this emphasis on the Second Advent, including themes of accountability for faithfulness at His coming, judgment on sin, and the hope of eternal life.

In this double focus on past and future, Advent also symbolizes the spiritual journey of individuals and a congregation, as they affirm that Christ has come, that He is present in the world today, and that He will come again in power.

That acknowledgment provides a basis for Kingdom ethics, for holy living arising from a profound sense that we live "between the times" and are called to be faithful stewards of what is entrusted to us as God's people. So, as the church celebrates God's inbreaking into history in the Incarnation, and anticipates a future consummation to that history for which "all creation is groaning awaiting its redemption," it also confesses its own responsibility as a people commissioned to "love the Lord your God with all your heart" and to "love your neighbor as yourself."





## The Spirit of Advent

Advent is marked by a spirit of expectation, of anticipation, of preparation, of longing. There is a yearning for deliverance from the evils of the world, first expressed by Israelite slaves in Egypt as they cried out from their bitter oppression. It is the cry of those who have experienced the tyranny of injustice in a world under the curse of sin, and yet who have hope of deliverance by a God who has heard the cries of oppressed slaves and brought deliverance! It is that hope, however faint at times, and that God, however distant He sometimes seems, which brings to the world the anticipation of a King who will rule with truth and justice and righteousness over His people and in His creation. It is that hope that once anticipated, and now anticipates anew, the reign of an Anointed One, a Messiah, who will bring peace and justice and righteousness to the world.

Part of the expectation also anticipates a judgment on sin and a calling of the world to accountability before God. We long for God to come and set the world right! Yet, as the prophet Amos warned, the expectation of a coming judgment at the "Day of the Lord" may not be the day of light that we might want, because the penetrating light of God's judgment on sin will shine just as brightly on God's people.

Because of this important truth, especially in the Eastern Orthodox Churches, the Season of Advent has been a time of fasting and penitence for sins similar to the Season of Lent. However, a different emphasis for the season of Advent has gradually unfolded in much of the rest of the church. The season of Advent has come to be celebrated more in terms of expectation or anticipation. Yet, the anticipation of the Coming of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament and Judaism was not in connection with remembrance of sins. Rather, it was in the context of oppression and injustice, the longing for redemption, not from personal guilt and sin but from the systemic evil of the world expressed in evil empires and tyrants. It is in that sense that all creation groans for its redemption as we witness the evil that so dominates our world (Rom 8:18-25).

Of course, there is the problem of longing for vindication from an evil world when we are contributors to that evil. This is the power of the images of Amos when he warns about longing for the "Day of the Lord" that will really be a day of darkness (Amos 5:18-20). Still, even with Amos' warning the time of Advent is one of expectation and anticipation, a longing for God's actions to restore all things and vindicate the righteous. This is why during Advent we as Christians also anticipate the Second Coming as a twin theme of the season. So, while some church traditions focus on penitence during Advent, the spirit of that expectation from the Old Testament is better captured with a joyous sense of expectancy. Rather than a time of mourning and fasting, Advent is celebrated as a time of joy and happiness as we await the coming of the King. (see Can We Sing Christmas Carols During Advent?)

There will be time enough during the rest of the journey through the Church Year to remember our sins. It begins in Epiphany when we hear about the brotherhood of the Kingdom, and realize our failure to effect it. Then as we move toward and through Lent we realize that the coming of Jesus served more to lay bare our own sin than it did to vindicate our righteousness. There will be time to shed Peter's bitter tears as we realize that what started with such possibility and expectation has apparently ended in such failure.

It is only as we experience that full cycle, beginning with unbridled joy in Advent that slowly fades into the realization of what we have done with and to the Christ, that the awful reality of Good Friday can have its full impact. And in that realization we can finally be ready to hear the Good News on Resurrection Sunday! That is the journey that the disciples took. And so there is value in taking the same journey beginning with the anticipation and joy of Advent! So, we celebrate with gladness the great promise in the Advent, yet knowing that there is also a somber tone as the theme of threat is added to the theme of promise. This is reflected in some of the Scripture readings for Advent, in which there is a strong prophetic tone of accountability and judgment on sin. But this is also faithful to the role of the Coming King who comes to rule, save, and judge the world.

Because of the dual themes of threat and promise, Advent is a time of preparation that is marked by prayer. While Lent is characterized by fasting and a spirit of penitence, Advent's prayers are prayers of humble devotion and commitment, prayers of submission, prayers for deliverance, prayers from those walking in darkness who are awaiting and anticipating a great light (Isa 9)!

The spirit of Advent is expressed well in the parable of the bridesmaids who are anxiously awaiting the coming of the Bridegroom (Matt 25:1-13). There is profound joy at the Bridegroom's expected coming. And yet a warning of the need for preparation echoes through the parable. But even then, the prayer of Advent is still:

Come, O Come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel!

## Evergreens and The Advent Wreath

The beginning of Advent is a time for the hanging of the green, decoration of the church with evergreen wreaths, boughs, or trees that help to symbolize the new and everlasting life brought through Jesus the Christ. Some churches have a special weekday service, or the first Sunday evening of Advent, or even the first Sunday morning of Advent, in which the church is decorated and the Advent wreath put in place. This service is most often primarily of music,

especially choir and hand bells, and Scripture reading, along with an explanation of the various symbols as they are placed in the sanctuary.

The **Advent wreath** is an increasingly popular symbol of the beginning of the Church year in many churches as well as homes. It is a circular evergreen wreath (real or artificial) with five candles, four around the wreath and one in the center. Since the wreath is symbolic and a vehicle to tell the Christmas story, there are various ways to understand the symbolism. The exact meaning given to the various aspects of the wreath is not as important as the story to which it invites us to listen, and participate.



The **circle of the wreath** reminds us of God Himself, His eternity and endless mercy, which has no beginning or end. The **green of the wreath** speaks of the hope that we have in God, the hope of newness, of renewal, of eternal life. **Candles** symbolize the light of God coming into the world through the birth of His son. The **four outer candles** represent the period of waiting during the four Sundays of Advent, which themselves symbolize the four centuries of waiting between the prophet Malachi and the birth of Christ.

The **colors of the candles** vary with different traditions, but there are usually three purple or blue candles, corresponding to the sanctuary colors of Advent, and one pink or rose candle. One of the purple candles is lighted the first Sunday of Advent, a Scripture is read, a short devotional or reading is given, and a prayer offered. On subsequent Sundays, previous candles are relighted with an additional one lighted. The pink candle is usually lighted on the third Sunday of Advent. However, different churches or traditions light the pink candle on different Sundays depending on the symbolism used (see above on Colors of Advent). In Churches that use a Service of the Nativity, it is often lighted on the fourth Sunday of Advent, the final Sunday before Christmas.

The **light of the candles** itself becomes an important symbol of the season. The light reminds us that Jesus is the light of the world that comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope. It also reminds us that we are called to be a light to the world as we reflect the light of God's grace to others (Isa 42:6). The progression in the lighting of the candles symbolizes the various aspects of our waiting experience. As the candles are lighted over the four week period, it also symbolizes the darkness of fear and hopelessness receding and the shadows of sin falling away as more and more light is shed into the world. The flame of each new candle reminds the worshippers that something is happening, and that more is yet to come. Finally, the light that has come into the world is plainly visible as the Christ candle is lighted at Christmas, and worshippers rejoice over the fact that the promise of long ago has been realized.

The **first candle** is traditionally the candle of **Expectation or Hope** (or in some traditions, **Prophecy**). This draws attention to the anticipation of the coming of a Messiah that weaves its way like a golden thread through Old Testament history. As God's people were abused by power hungry kings, led astray by self-centered prophets, and lulled into apathy by half-hearted religious leaders, there arose a longing among some for God to raise up a new king who could show them how to be God's people. They yearned for a return of God's dynamic presence in their midst. And so, God revealed to some of the prophets that indeed He would not leave His people without a true Shepherd. While they expected a new earthly king, their expectations fell far short of God's revelation of Himself in Christ. And yet, the world is not yet fully redeemed. So, we again with expectation, with hope, await God's new work in history, the second Advent, in which He will again reveal Himself to the world. And we understand in a profound sense that the best, the highest of our expectations will fall far short of what our Lord's Second Advent will reveal!

The **remaining three candles** of Advent may be associated with different aspects of the Advent story in different churches, or even in different years. Usually they are organized around characters or themes as a way to unfold the story and direct attention to the celebrations and worship in the season. So, the sequence for the remaining three Sundays might be Bethlehem, Shepherds, Angels. Or Peace, Love, Joy. Or John the Baptist, the Magi, Mary. Or the Annunciation, Proclamation, Fulfillment. Whatever sequence is used, the Scripture readings, prayers, lighting of the candles, the participation of worshipers in the service, all are geared to telling the story of redemption through God's grace in the Incarnation.

The **third candle**, usually for the Third Sunday of Advent, is traditionally Pink or Rose, and symbolizes **Joy** at the soon Advent of the Christ. Sometimes the colors of the sanctuary and vestments are also changed to Rose for this Sunday. However, as noted above, increasingly in many churches, the pink Advent candle is used on the fourth Sunday to mark the joy at the impending Nativity of Jesus.

Whatever sequence is adopted for these Sundays, the theme of Joy can still be the focus for the pink candle. For example, when using the third Sunday to commemorate the visit of the Magi the focus can be on the Joy of worshipping the new found King. Or the Shepherds as the symbol for the third Sunday brings to mind the joy of the proclamation made to them in the fields, and the adoration expressed as they knelt before the Child at the manger. If used on the fourth Sunday of Advent, it can symbolize the Joy in fulfilled hope.

The **center candle** is white and is called the **Christ Candle**. It is traditionally lighted on Christmas Eve or Day. However, since many Protestant churches do not have services on those days, many light it on the Sunday preceding Christmas, with all five candles continuing to be lighted in services through Epiphany (Jan 6). The **central location** of the Christ Candle reminds us that the incarnation is the heart of the season, giving light to the world.

## Celebrating Advent

Advent is one of the few Christian festivals that can be observed in the home as well as at church. With its association with Christmas, Advent is a natural time to involve children in activities at home that directly connect with worship at church. In the home an Advent wreath is often placed on the dining table and lighted at meals, with Scripture readings preceding the lighting of the candles, especially on Sunday. A new candle is lighted each Sunday during the four weeks, and then the same candles are lighted each meal during the week. In this context, it provides the opportunity for family devotion and prayer together, and helps teach the Faith to children, especially if they are involved in reading the daily Scriptures.

It is common in many homes to try to mark the beginning of Advent in other ways as well, for the same purpose of instruction in the faith. Some families decorate the house for the beginning of Advent, or bake special cookies or treats, or simply begin to use table coverings for meals. An Advent Calendar is a way to keep children involved in the entire season. There are a wide variety of Advent calendars, but usually they are simply a card or poster with windows that can be opened, one each day of Advent, to reveal some symbol or picture associated with the Old Testament story leading up to the birth of Jesus. One unique and specialized Advent calendar that can be used either in the home or the sanctuary is a Jesse Tree. (We have available an online Advent calendar with devotionals for each day of Advent as well as Christmas through Epiphany Day: NazNet's Advent and Christmas Celebration). All of these provide opportunities to teach children the significance of this sacred time, and to remind ourselves of it as well.

In congregational worship, the Advent wreath is the central teaching symbol of the season, the focal point for drawing the congregation into the beginning of the story of redemption that will unfold throughout the church year. For this reason, members of the congregation are often involved in lighting the Advent candles and reading the appropriate Scriptures each Sunday. While in some churches it is customary for this to be done by families, it can also be an especially good opportunity to demonstrate the unity of the entire community of Faith by including those without families, such as those never married, divorced, widowed, elderly who live by themselves, or college students away from home.

## **An Advent Reflection**

It is truly a humbling experience to read back through the Old Testament and see how frail and imperfect all the "heroes" actually are. Abraham, the coward who cannot believe the promise. Jacob, the cheat who struggles with everybody. Joseph, the immature and arrogant teen. Moses, the impatient murderer who cannot wait for God. Gideon, the cowardly Baal-worshipper. Samson, the womanizing drunk. David, the power abusing adulterer. Solomon, the unwise wise man. Hezekiah, the reforming king who could not quite go far enough. And finally, a very young Jewish girl from a small village in a remote corner of a great empire.

It never ceases to amaze me why God could not have chosen "better" people to do His work in the world. Yet if God can use them, and reveal Himself through them in such marvelous ways, it means that He might be able to use me, inadequate, and unwise, and too often lacking in faith that I am. And it means that I need to be careful that I do not in my own self-righteousness put limits on what God can do with the most unlikely of people in the most unlikely of circumstances. I think that is part of the wonder of the Advent Season.

-Dennis Bratcher Copyright ©

## Advent Wreath I

This symbolic Advent wreath is easy to construct and provides a focus for the family's prayerful anticipation of Christ through the lighting of each candle. Helen McLoughlin provides several suggestions for alternative methods of making one's Advent wreath.

### Item Tools



store, print, email

### DIRECTIONS

Most popular of the Advent customs handed down to us is the Advent wreath made of evergreens, bound to a circle of wire. German in origin — it was taken, so we are told, from the pagan fire wheel — the wreath represents the cycle of thousands of years from Adam to Christ during which the world awaited the coming of a Redeemer. It also represents the cycle of years since then that we have been awaiting His second and final coming in glory. It bears four candles, equally spaced, three purple ones to be lighted on the "penitential" Sundays, and a rose-colored one for *Gaudete*, the joyful Sunday in Advent. Candles may be placed inside or outside the wreath.

Any kind of Christmas wreath such as those hung in windows may be used. It may be set on a kitchen or dining room table, on an end table in the living room, or in a child's bedroom. However, it is most appealing when suspended by four purple ribbons from a light fixture in the ceiling.

When our children were small we bought a large, permanently preserved pine wreath and used it year after year. Now that they are going to school they help to make a new one each Advent. Inexpensive and easy to assemble is the wreath we make from a bunch or two of laurel leaves bound to a circle of wire from coat hangers. The evergreens are secured by fine wire to the circle. Candles and ribbons are added as the wreath is put together. Laurel is practical because it does not shed when suspended over the dining room table. Moreover, laurel is a symbol of victory, and thus reminds us that Christ's coming means victory over sin and death. Loveliest of wreaths and fragrant, too, is one of fresh princess pine. When we use that type, we hang it in the living room and add a single silver star to it each evening in Advent when the candles are lighted for prayers. Stars are cut from metallic paper.

City dwellers may make an attractive wreath of fireproof green paper, while country folks will find a metal barrel hoop ideal as a frame for whatever evergreens are at hand. In our children's classrooms in Corpus Christi School, New York City, Advent greens are sometimes kept fresh in inexpensive plastic rings.

Activity Source: *Family Advent Customs* by Helen McLoughlin, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1979

# ADVENT WREATH BLESSING

950 All make the sign of cross as the minister says:

**Our help is in the name of the Lord.**

All reply:

**Who made heaven and earth.**

951 One of those present or the minister reads a text of sacred Scripture, for example:

**Brothers and sisters, listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: 9:1-2, 5-6**

*The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.*

**The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone.**

**You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing,**

**As they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as men make merry when dividing spoils.**

**For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder dominion rests.**

**They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.**

**His dominion is vast and forever peaceful,**

**From David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains**

**By judgment and justice, both now and forever.**

952 A minister who is a priest or deacon says the prayer of blessing with hands outstretched; a lay minister says the prayer with hands joined.

**Lord our God,**

**we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ:**

**he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,**

**he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,**

**he is the Savior of every nation.**

**Lord God,**

**let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath.**

**May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.**

**May he come quickly and not delay.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord.**

**R. Amen.**

## Blessing of the Advent Wreath

Before using your Advent wreath, it is appropriate to bless the wreath. This blessing can be performed at home in the family.

### Item Tools



store, print, email

**Father:** Our help is in the Name of the Lord.

**All answer:** Who made heaven and earth.

**Father:** *Let us pray.* O God, by whose word all things are sanctified, pour forth Thy blessing upon this wreath, and grant that we who use it may prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ and may receive from Thee abundant graces. Through Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

*He sprinkles the wreath with holy water*

# Advent Wreath Prayers

## II

The following are the Advent wreath prayers, which change each week. This are prayed at the lighting of each candle every day during Advent.

### Item Tools



store,  
print, email

The first candle is lighted, and the prayer for the first week is said.

### Father:

*Let us pray.* Stir up Thy might, we beg Thee, O Lord, and come, so that we may escape through Thy protection and be saved by Thy help from the dangers that threaten us because of our sins. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

*During the first week one candle is left burning during the evening meal, at prayers or at bedtime.*

*Two candles are lighted on the second Sunday and allowed to burn as before. The prayer for the week is:*

### Father:

*Let us pray.* O Lord, stir up our hearts that we may prepare for Thy only begotten Son, that through His coming we may be made worthy to serve Thee with pure souls. Through the same Christ our Lord.

**All:** Amen.

*Three candles, including the rose candle, are lighted on Gaudete, the third Sunday, and during that week. The following prayer is said:*

**Father:**

*Let us pray.* We humbly beg Thee, O Lord, to listen to our prayers; and by the grace of Thy coming bring light into our darkened minds. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

*All four candles are lighted on the fourth Sunday and allowed to burn as before. The prayer said the fourth week is:*

**Father:**

*Let us pray.* Stir up Thy might, we pray Thee, O Lord, and come; rescue us through Thy great strength so that salvation, which has been hindered by our sins, may be hastened by the grace of Thy gentle mercy. Who livest and reignest for ever and ever.

**All:** Amen.

Prayer Source: *Family Advent Customs* by Helen McLoughlin, The Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota, 1979



# The Jesse Tree

Dennis Bratcher

☉The Story of the Jesse Tree ☉Making a Jesse Tree ☉Table of Scripture Readings for the Story

While nearly everyone has a Christmas tree, there has been reluctance in some circles to incorporate Christmas trees into the church sanctuary, arising from suspicions about the pagan origin of the symbol. However, since the Christmas tree has become such a part of Christmas celebration around the world, it seems more important to give it some clearly Christian meaning.

Some churches do this with a service of the Hanging of the Greens. Some use a Chrismon™ Tree. Others use a tree, either at home or in the sanctuary, as a Jesse Tree. This is a tree, or a large banner with a symbolic tree, that is decorated each week, usually by the children, with ornaments or objects that represent Old Testament events from Creation to the Birth of Jesus. The ornaments are traditionally handmade, and are added one each day of Advent, or a group on each Sunday, with explanations of the symbols and a brief verse of Scripture from the story represented. Some churches choose to decorate the tree with small items of warm clothing as a way to minister to the needy in the community.

Some churches combine the idea of a Jesse Tree with a Chrismon™ Tree, making and using the Chrismons™ to correspond to the story of the Jesse Tree. However, the Jesse Tree is really an Advent Tree anticipating the coming of Christmas. So, it may be more instructive, especially for children, to allow the Jesse Tree to represent anticipation during Advent while letting a Chrismon™ Tree be the celebration of Christmas itself.

## The Story of the Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is named from Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot will spring forth from the stump of Jesse, and a branch out of his roots." It is a vehicle to tell the Story of God in the Old Testament, and to connect the Advent Season with the faithfulness of God across 4,000 years of history. The Branch is a biblical sign of newness out of discouragement, which became a way to talk about the expected messiah (e.g., Jer 23:5). It is therefore an appropriate symbol of Jesus the Christ, who is the revelation of the grace and faithfulness of God.

The Israelites through the descendants of Abraham were chosen by God to be a light to the nations. When they were imprisoned by the Egyptians, they cried out to God for deliverance from their oppression. And God responded: "I have seen the misery of my people in Egypt, and I have heard their cry . . . I have come to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them to a good land" (Exod 3:7-8). And so He entered history in a marvelous way to deliver them and bring them into a place where they could worship God and serve Him in peace and joy instead of serving Pharaoh in hard service. God promised to be with them and to be their God, and they would be His people.

But as they settled into the land that God had given them, "they forgot God, their Deliverer, who had done great things in Egypt" (Psa 106:21). As they grew secure in the land, they began to believe that "my power and the strength of my own hand have gotten me these things" (Deut 8:17). Even though God had raised up godly leaders like David, later kings and religious leaders served their own interests, and the people began to worship the false gods of the land. They even gave offerings to the idol ba'al, supposedly the god of rain and fertility of the land, thanking him for the prosperity they enjoyed.

But God grieved because "she did not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the wine, and the oil, and who lavished upon her silver and gold that they used for ba'al" (Hos 2:8). God had "planted [them] as a choice vine from the purest stock" (Jer 2:21) and had expected them to grow and flourish and carry out His purposes in the world. But they had degenerated into a wild bush with worthless fruit.

Because they had forgotten God, they also forgot the call of God to "do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with your God" (Mic 6:8). God sent prophets to warn them of the consequences of failing to be His people. Amos warned them to "seek me and live" (5:4). Through Jeremiah, God promised them that if they would turn from their wicked ways He would bless them and be with them in the land (7:5-7). But he also said: "Take heed, O Jerusalem, or I shall turn from you in disgust, and make you a desolation" (6:8).

Some of the people longed for new leaders, a new "anointed" (Heb: *meshiach*; Eng: messiah) shepherd king like David who would help them to become what God had called them to be. But most of the people would not listen. They continued to worship the idols of ba'al. They continued to cheat the poor, steal from each other, neglect the needy, and do all manner of evil.

So God let them go their own way and suffer the consequences of their choices. The Babylonian armies came and destroyed the temple, the city of Jerusalem, the land, and took the people into slavery. The choice planting of God that had such promise, that God had tended so carefully and encouraged to grow, was cut down and became a mere stump (Isa 5:1-10).

But God did not give up on this people! Even though they had disobeyed, even though they had forsaken God for other gods, even though they had miserably failed to be His people and to let Him be their God, the God of Abraham, and

Isaac, and Jacob still loved them. He had made a commitment to these people that He would not allow to be undone even by their rejection of Him.

He had already told them this through the prophets, but they had not understood then. Jeremiah had promised a day when God would again plant and build (31:28). And Isaiah had spoken of a time when God would cause a new shoot, a new king, to spring from the cut-off stump of the lineage of Jesse, David's father (11:1). During the Exile, suffering under the consequences of sin, they had little reason to suppose that God would do anything new. Still, the old promises echoed across the years, even if they could not believe them or even understand them.

In spite of their failures, in spite of their inability to envision a future beyond exile, there came a time when the prophets again announced a new thing, proclaiming "good tidings" to the people: "Here is your God!" (Isa 40:1-11). The Exile was ended! God would bring back to life a nation that was already dead (Eze 37). Long ago they had been slaves in Egypt, with nothing they could do to change their condition, and yet God had chosen to deliver.

So now, in the midst of their failure and hopelessness, God had again entered history as Deliverer. They would have another chance to be His people, not because they had earned it, no more than they had deserved it the first time; but simply because God in His grace had chosen to forgive.

They returned to the land. But across the years, they again struggled to obey and live up to their calling. They would never again slide into the worship of false gods. They had learned that lesson. But the great kingdom that they dreamed of restoring remained only a dream. They had hoped for a new king like David to lead them into a glorious future in which they would rule the world. They hoped to throw off the control of the Greeks and later the Romans and become a great nation. But it didn't happen. And they became disillusioned and discouraged.

So, they again hoped for God to raise up a new king, a new messiah, to deliver them from the oppression of the world. They longed for peace and deliverance from the tyranny of a sinful world. The prophets again brought the word of God to them, and promised a newness. Even though they struggled to understand and believe, they held onto the hope that the same God who brought slaves out of Egypt, and who brought exiles out of Babylon, could bring Messiah into the world!

We know the rest of that story. God was faithful to that promise, and a new King was born in Bethlehem. So we can exclaim with the old man Simeon: "My eyes have seen your salvation which you have prepared before all people, a light of revelation to the nations, and for glory to your people Israel!" (Luke 2:30-32).

But we also know that the world is still with us. Even though we can have Peace and Joy through the presence of Jesus Christ, we still long for deliverance from the oppression of sin in the world. We long for the full reign of the King, and the Kingdom of Peace that He will bring. So, while we celebrate the birth of the Branch, the new shoot from the stump of Jesse, we still anticipate with hope the Second Advent, and await the completion of the promise.

The Jesse Tree helps us retell this story, and express this hope.

## **Making a Jesse Tree**

A Jesse tree, either at home or in the sanctuary, can be either a banner or a poster on a wall, with the symbols fastened to it; or a tree, with the symbols hung from the branches.

A banner can be as plain or as elaborate as one's imagination. Usually, a banner and symbols for a sanctuary are made of heavy felt or cotton, or other appropriate fabric, the design is embroidered or appliquéd, and the symbols attached with pins or Velcro. One for the home or a Sunday School Class can be made from poster board, the design done with markers, and the symbols colored, made from construction paper, or cut from old Christmas cards or magazines.

The background is usually Purple or Blue (the colors of Advent), with a large cut stump and a single green branch growing from one side. The symbols are attached around the branch, usually with a star as the last symbol at the top. If a tree (real or artificial, as long as it's green) is used, it should be a relatively small one if only one ornament a day is to be added. A large tree can be used if all of the children make ornaments each Sunday, or if the ornaments are a communal project. The ornaments can be widely varied, from simple hand colored paper from the children, to more elaborate craft items. Different styles can be used each year. If Chrismons™ are used for the Jesse Tree, the primary colors of the ornaments should be the liturgical colors of Christmas, white and gold.

While it is sometimes tempting to apply "quality control" and exclude some ornaments on a sanctuary tree, especially those done by children, it is probably better to allow them for the sake of community and celebrate the unity of the tree itself, and what it represents in providing a place for such diversity.

## **Sample Story and Readings for a Jesse Tree**

The story of God in the Old Testament can be told either in terms of the main characters of the story, or of pivotal events that helped shape and define the people's journey of Faith through the Old Testament. The Scripture readings given here provide an outline of the story. Since some of the characters and events are recounted over many chapters, some will need to be summarized and a single selection of Scripture that encapsulates the story, usually 4-8 verses, selected for public reading.

The actual story that is told with each symbol should be a short (2-4 min) summary of the person or event, including their significance in the unfolding witness to God's self-revelation in history. While connections can be made where appropriate to New Testament events, the Old Testament story should not be treated only as preparation for the New Testament. The continuity of God's love, patience, and grace across the centuries to the most unlikely people in the midst of their failures should be the focus. Of course, that climaxes in the Incarnation. But we as Christians need to listen to the Old Testament Story for what it teaches us about God and ourselves, rather than use it to get to something else. That is the function of the Old Testament as Scripture (see Hearing Old Testament Advent Texts). Other characters or events may be substituted for some of these, as long as the main story line of God's grace, of human failure, and renewed hope in God is clearly presented. Different aspects of some of the characters or events may be emphasized in different years. If the Jesse Tree becomes an annual practice, a three or four year cycle emphasizing various aspects of the story can be developed. Since the day on which Christmas falls will vary, the last week's characters will need to be adjusted to the number of days between Sunday and Christmas Day. The Magi can also be used on Christmas Day to conclude with the symbol of the star for the top of the tree, or a candle can be used for the Magi and the star for Christmas Day.

If the tree is used in public only on Sundays, the following week's story is given each Sunday with the corresponding symbols. This is an especially appropriate activity for children's church, or to use as the children's sermon in morning worship during Advent.

### Table of Scripture Readings for the Story

Date	Persons	Events/Themes	Scripture	Symbols
<b>First Sunday</b>	Introduction of the Jesse Tree		1 Sam 16:1-13 Isa 11:1-10	The Tree
<b>Mon Wk 1</b>	God	Creation	Gen 1:1-2:3	Dove
<b>Tues Wk 1</b>	Adam and Eve	The First Sin	Gen 2:4-3:24	Tree with Fruit or Apple
<b>Wed Wk 1</b>	Noah	The Flood	Gen 6:11-22, 7:17-8:12, 20-9:17	Rainbow or Ark
<b>Thur Wk 1</b>	Abraham	The Promise	Gen 12:1-7, 15:1-6	Field of Stars
<b>Friday Wk 1</b>	Isaac	Offering of Isaac	Gen 22:1-19	Ram
<b>Sat Wk 1</b>	Jacob	Assurance of the Promise	Gen 27:41-28:22	Ladder
<b>Second Sunday</b>	Joseph	God's Providence	Gen 37, 39:1-50:21	Sack of Grain or Coat
<b>Mon Wk 2</b>	Moses	God's Leadership	Exod 2:1-4:20	Burning Bush
<b>Tues Wk 2</b>	Israelites	Passover and Exodus	Exod 12:1-14:31	Lamb
<b>Wed Wk 2</b>	God	Giving the Torah at Sinai	Exod 19:1-20:20	Tablets of the Torah
<b>Thur Wk 2</b>	Joshua	The Fall of Jericho	Josh 1:1-11, 6:1-20	Ram's Horn Trumpet
<b>Fri Wk 2</b>	Gideon	Unlikely Heroes	Judg 2:6-23, 6:1-6, 11-8:28	Clay Water Pitcher
<b>Sat Wk 2</b>	Samuel	The Beginning of the Kingdom	1 Sam 3:1-21, 7:1-8:22, 9:15-10:9	Crown
<b>Third Sunday</b>	David	A Shepherd for the People	1 Sam 16:1-23-17:58, 2 Sam 5:1-5, 7:1-17	Shepherd's Crook or Harp
<b>Mon Wk 3</b>	Elijah	The Threat of False Gods	1 Kng 17:1-16, 18:17-46	Stone Altar

<b>Tues Wk 3</b>	Hezekiah	Faithfulness and Deliverance	2 Kng 18:1-19:19, 32-37	An Empty Tent
<b>Wed Wk 3</b>	Isaiah	The Call to Holiness	Isa 1:10-20, 6:1-13, 8:11-9:7	Fire Tongs with Hot Coal
<b>Thur Wk 3</b>	Jeremiah	The Exile	Jer 1:4-10, 2:4-13, 7:1-15, 8:22-9:1-11	Tears
<b>Fri Wk 3</b>	Habakkuk	Waiting	Hab 1:1-2:1, 3:16-19	Stone Watchtower
<b>Sat Wk 3</b>	Nehemiah	Return and Rebuilding	Neh 1:1-2:8, 6:15-16, 13:10-22	City Wall
<b>Fourth Sunday</b>	John the Baptist	Repentance	Luke 1:57-80, 3:1-207:18-30	Scallop Shell
<b>Mon Wk 4</b>	Mary	The Hope for a Future	Luke 1:26-38	White Lily
<b>Tues Wk 4</b>	Elizabeth	Joy	Luke 1:39-56	Mother and Child
<b>Wed Wk 4</b>	Zechariah	Anticipation	Luke 1:57-80	Pencil and Tablet
<b>Thurs Wk 4</b>	Joseph	Trust	Matt 1:19-25	Carpenter's Square or Hammer
<b>Fri Wk 4</b>	Magi	Worship	Matt 2:1-12	Star or Candle
<b>Dec 24</b>	Jesus	Birth of the Messiah	Luke 2:1-20	Manger
<b>Dec 25</b>	Christ	The Son of God	John 1:1-18	Chi-Rho Symbol

Go to Daily Readings for Advent

-Dennis Bratcher, Copyright © , Dennis Bratcher

By Glenn C] Byer, MA SLD

Christ's coming in history was an amazing moment, according to our readings today. When John starts his preaching it was at a singular moment of history, it was a time chosen by God even in terms of the Roman Empire. The message is clear, baptism for the forgiveness of sins under Roman occupation, like the freedom from the Babylonian captivity granted by Cyrus the Persian centuries before, is not an accident. And even if, as the psalm tells us, it seems like a dream, the Gospel makes it clear that salvation in Christ is something very real indeed.

It reinforces this concrete thinking in the passage we read today, that God has truly begun something in us and will bring it to completion. On this day we can also reflect on how this passage of scripture is used in liturgical prayer. Ordination rites, from the admission to candidacy to the ordination of a bishop all use this passage in some form, asking that God, who has begun the good work, bring it to completion. No life of faith is ever complete until we come to the life of heaven.

So it seems that while we look to the coming of Christ as a future event, we stand firmly planted on this world, living our lives and working for the coming of the kingdom.

## **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

By Maribeth Howell, OP

The tone of today's words from Jeremiah may strike us as somewhat "out of character" for this prophet, since Jeremiah is not usually associated with calling attention to the Davidic promise. Many scholars suggest that these verses, which do not appear in the Septuagint, are a late addition to the text. Still, there are other references to the Davidic dynasty within Jeremiah and today's verses seem to bear close resemblance to them (see chapters 22 and 23).

Here the promise of a just king or "just shoot" (first recorded in 2 Sam 7), a descendant of David is renewed and the hope for such a monarch is stirred. While few of Israel's kings came anywhere near to fulfilling role of the idealized ruler depicted in Psalm 72, the hope for such a monarch remained.

It was the responsibility of the king to see that justice was practiced in the land. According to the text, when the king does what is "right and just," Judah will be safe and Jerusalem, secure. This is followed by the announcement that the city will be called "the Lord of Justice." This is an interesting twist from the passage found in 23:6, where it states that the king will be called by this name! Patrick Miller considers this naming of the city by its people especially significant because it reflects a self-consciousness on the part of the community, an awareness "to be committed to all those ways God has defined as right living in relationship with God and neighbor."

© 2003, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

---

## **Psalm 25:4-5, 8-9, 10, 14**

By Owen Cummings

The psalm is an individual lament, and to get the full flavor one should read the psalm in its entirety, and not only the few verses we have here. The psalmist waits for God to make himself known, to vindicate his shame, to forgive his sins and transgressions out of his steadfast love. In the context of Advent, however, two things emerge from our text. First, lifting up one's soul to the Lord. As we mark a new beginning, a new liturgical year in the life of the Church, what better resolution might we make than To you, O Lord, I lift up my soul. That refrain-become-resolution is repeated four times. It invites us to a recognition of God's utter primacy in our lives, a primacy that does not compete with those whom we love, with our responsibilities, with our joys, but a primacy that recognizes God as the gracious horizon within which all and everything exists. Second, and similarly, there is the emphasis on "waiting." For you I wait all the day. "Waiting" is a strong Advent theme. We wait for the Christ to advent at Christmas, we wait for him to advent in word and sacrament, we wait for him to advent at the Parousia. Advent-waiting is the mark of Christian living. It is not a waiting for an absent God, but an active waiting for the ever-fuller manifestation of the ever-present God.

© 2003, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

---

## **1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:2**

By Fr. Damien Dougherty, O.F.M.

Immediately following his expression of joy over the happy news of the faith and charity reported of the Thessalonian Church, Paul prays in order that the disciples, with all their innermost being - intelligence, will, affections - may be holy so that they will be found blameless on the day of judgment when Jesus returns with his angels. The exhortation is linked, well, within the immediate context of Paul's overflowing joy and his prayer to God that their charity will both grow and abound.

Paul's recommendation that they make progress in the Christian life by comporting themselves in the way that they had learned, as that amounts to the necessary condition to be found pleasing to God, is made in the Lord Jesus. This is the very atmosphere within which Paul moves, thinks, speaks, and breathes. Subsequently, throughout his missionary endeavors, this theme of the progressive character of the Christian life will not only return but be developed as he will continue to exhort various churches to "put on the Lord Jesus" long after their baptismal "reclotting" (Rom. 13,14; Gal. 3,27).

Furthermore, this condition of subsistence in the Lord Jesus provides the bond that constitutes Paul and the faithful within the unity of one, sole body. The Apostle receives his authority in the name of the Lord so that the precepts and the instructions that he already preached to this community of disciples were, likewise, given in the name and with the authority and the efficacious virtues of the grace of Christ.

© 2003, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

## Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

By John Paul Heil

Main Theme: Be VIGILANT for "that day" when the Son of Man comes again.

The first part of the season of Advent focuses our attention on being prepared to meet Jesus as the Son of Man, either at the end of our lives or when he comes again in glory for salvation at the end of time. That coming will be preceded by cosmic signs ("in the sun, moon, and stars") and worldwide disturbances ("roaring of the sea and the waves"). So intense will be these cosmic upheavals that people will die in fright of what is coming upon the world. But then they will see Jesus as the Son of Man coming in a cloud with a power and great glory over all of these cosmic disturbances. When such cosmic signs occur, it is the signal for us to be ready ("stand erect and raise your heads") for the final salvation of the world.

We are not to be so preoccupied with either the celebrations or anxieties of daily living that we are not prepared for "that day"—either the last day of our lives or the last day of the world. None of us can escape "that day," as it will assault all who live on earth. But are we vigilant and prayerful enough to escape the cosmic, worldwide tribulations to come and stand ready for our salvation from Jesus as the Son of Man?

### First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Elaine Rendler, from Today's Liturgy 2007

Welcome, *bienvenidos*, *chào mừng*, especially to our new subscribers. May the Holy Spirit inspire us all as we begin a new liturgical year of the Lord in service to our worshipping communities.

These preparation pages of *Today's Liturgy* can enrich your resources and minimize your preparation time. Here's how the music suggestions work: The first selection listed in each category is the "pick of the day." The second in each category is geared for organ accompaniment. The third selection has been chosen with guitar accompaniment in mind. If the first choice doesn't suit you, then try the second or third. The rest of the suggestions are based on appropriate seasonal and liturgical texts. Careful consideration has been given to the musical style of the piece relative to the ritual moment. This means you will find that the spirit of the entrance music is celebratory in style and suitable for a procession in contrast to a selection that may be topically appropriate but reflective in its compositional style. *Breaking Bread Music Issue* now include selections from *Spirit & Song 1* and *2* in our continuing effort to unify our assemblies.

With our struggles, today's world is similar to the ancient world of today's Scriptures, but Advent people wait with hope and are urged to live in love for the coming of the Son of Man.

December 1 was World AIDS Day (for resources for World AIDS Day, visit [nca.org](http://nca.org)). Pope Benedict said, "I feel close to people with AIDS and their families, invoking upon them the Lord's help and comfort."

© 2006, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

### First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Paul Covino, from Today's Liturgy 2007

The *Book of Blessings* (ch 47; The Liturgical Press, 800-858-5450, [litpress.org](http://litpress.org)) provides two forms for an Order for the Blessing of an Advent Wreath. The first is for use after the homily within Mass. Some communities adapt this by celebrating the blessing at the time of the penitential rite in the opening rites. The second form, a celebration of the word, is well suited to schools and to parishes that may not have Mass this weekend. *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (110-112; OCP 9717TL) has a similar blessing for home use.

Over the past few years, revisions have been made in some of the documents that guide Roman Catholic liturgy. The liturgical document that serves as the basis for all others, though, has remained constant over the past four decades, and that is the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy* (*Sacrosanctum concilium*), promulgated 43 years ago during the Second Vatican Council. Since the Second Vatican Council is more a historical event than a living memory for the majority of today's Catholics, it is important to introduce younger members of liturgy committees (and some older members, too!) to the foundational theological and pastoral principles that are in this document. It is available in *The Liturgy Documents: Volume One* (OCP 12834TL).

Liturgy of the Hours: Begin week one of the psalm cycle.

© 2006, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

### First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Elaine Rendler, from Today's Liturgy 2004

Today the church begins a new liturgical year, Year C in the Lectionary for Mass. This year we will hear readings (semi-continuously) from the longest gospel, that of Luke. A

black-speaking Christian and gifted writer, Luke was probably converted by Paul. He wrote either in Antioch (now Syria) or Asia Minor (now Turkey). The church then (late 80's) was becoming more Gentile than Jewish and Christian communities were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. In The Collegeville Bible Commentary (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, p. 936-8), Benedictine Jerome Kodell points out these main themes of Luke's poetic gospel: 1) salvation for all, 2) mercy and forgiveness, 3) joy, 4) the journey, 5) modern Christian living, 6) fulfillment of prophecy, and 7) ascension.

We offer a special welcome to all new members of the OCP family: clergy, staff, and assemblies. Move slowly with the new materials and repertoire. Know that we've all been

there at one time. The entire staff at OCP is ready to assist you—just call 1-800-LITURGY (548-8749). Also, don't forget there are web resources at [www.ocp.org](http://www.ocp.org) and [www.liturgy.com](http://www.liturgy.com).  
December 1 is World AIDS Day. Just recently I heard a homily at a Confirmation liturgy about AIDS being the result of behavior linked to sexual orientation. I thought we were beyond this. Worldwide in 2002, 42 million were living with HIV, while 3.1 million men, women and children died of this pandemic. Ora pro nobis.

© 2003, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

## First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Paul Covino, from Today's Liturgy 2004

The General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar contains the Church's official guidelines for the liturgical year. This document is found toward the front of the Sacramentary. As you begin your preparations for Advent, pay attention to what this document says about the season: "Advent has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation" (#39).

The Book of Blessings (ch 47; The Liturgical Press, 800-858-5450, [www.litpress.org](http://www.litpress.org)) provides two forms for an "Order for the Blessing of an Advent Wreath." The first is for use within Mass. The second form, a celebration of the Word, is well suited to schools and to parishes that may not have Mass this weekend. Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers (pp.110–112; OCP #9717TA) has a similar blessing for home use. December 3 is the 40th anniversary of the Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy. Take time to read (or re-read!) this foundational document that guides the liturgy of the Roman Catholic Church. It is available in The Documents of Vatican Council II (Liturgy Training Publications, 800-933-1800, [www.ltp.org](http://www.ltp.org)).

Liturgy of the Hours: Begin week one of the psalm cycle.

© 2003, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

## First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Elaine Rendler, from Today's Liturgy 2001

First of all, a gracious welcome to all of you who are just beginning your first season with OCP. The music suggestions are to help you prepare your liturgies for Sundays and special feasts while the columns are meant to affirm, challenge and share current information about liturgy from a pastoral liturgy perspective.

When choosing music, remember that the first suggestion in each category is my "best pick" for the day. It expresses some aspect of the liturgical season, the texts of the day, and/or the style of the ritual moment. For example, gathering songs and sending forth music again recommendations that do well with processional movement. Songs suggested for the preparation of gifts often have texts that require attention to the written page, while communion processions are chosen so that people might sing without books while processing.

It's important to realize that the first selection is chosen for its appropriateness to the liturgy, not instrumentation. It may require organ, guitar or piano as the foundation accompaniment. If that doesn't work for you, go to the second selection. That one is usually more conducive to organ accompaniment. The third selection is meant for assemblies who are accompanied primarily by guitars. Recommendation? Do the first when you can, go to the second or third choice if the first doesn't work for your assembly.

© 2001, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

## First Sunday of Advent, cycle C

By Paul Covino, from Today's Liturgy 2001

Tomorrow marks the 37th anniversary of the *Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy*, the Second Vatican Council document that formally set in motion the liturgical reforms that guide the worship of the Roman Catholic Church today. The fifth chapter of this document addressed the liturgical year, and called for revisions of the Church's calendar. These revisions began to unfold in 1969 with the publication of the *General Norms for the Liturgical Year and the Calendar*. Liturgical preparations for seasons such as Advent should begin with a review of the brief guidelines for each season in this document. "Advent," the document says, "has a twofold character: as a season to prepare for Christmas when Christ's first coming to us is remembered; as a season when that remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ's Second Coming at the end of time. Advent is thus a period for devout and joyful expectation" (#39).

The *Book of Blessings* (ch 47) provides two forms for an "Order for the Blessing of an Advent Wreath." The first is for use within Mass. The second form, a celebration of the Word, is suited to schools and to parishes that may not have Mass this weekend. *Catholic Household Blessings and Prayers* (OCP #9717, pp. 110–112) has a similar blessing for home use.

Liturgy of the Hours: Begin week one of the psalm cycle.

© 2001, OCP Publications. All rights reserved.

## This Is the Day

By Elaine Rendler, from This is the Day

The theme of Advent is twofold: the anticipation of Christ's second coming at the end of time (eschatology) and the commemoration of Christ's birth (incarnation). Luke's gospel makes the shift from eschatological theology to incarnational theology by the Second Sunday of Advent this year, while all four of the readings from Paul's letters (second reading) are directed to people of his day who were expecting the second coming during their lifetime. Because of the expected imminence of the second coming, Paul's epistles are mainly instructions to his followers on how to conduct their lives in the interim. With the exception of the Third Sunday, when a canticle (Isaiah 12) is used as the response to the first reading, the Advent responsorial psalms (Pss 25, 85, 126) are psalms of lament.

Liturgy committees need to decide when and how to shift from eschatological to incarnational theology, because this will affect music and prayers. Advent Preface 1 for the eucharistic prayer, for example, contains eschatological material while Preface 2, meant to be used from December 17-24, is incarnational. Suggested memorial acclamations are #2 and #3, both of which ask the Lord to come again in glory.

## There Will Be Signs....

By Rev. Walter J. Burghardt, SJ

This is the "good news" of our Lord Jesus Christ? "Distress among nations"? "People will stop breathing out of fear and foreboding"? "The forces of heaven will be shaken loose"? (Lk 21:25-26). On this note we begin preparing for Christmas? If the Gospel that opens Advent did not puzzle you, you weren't really listening. This is what a dear black friend of mine used to call "deep stuff." Not only deep, but complex, complicated. To unpack the Gospel, suppose we focus on three realities: (1) Luke's Jesus; (2) today's Jesus; (3) you and me.<sup>1</sup>

I

First, Luke's Jesus. Whenever you snip seven verses from a Gospel chapter, you've lost the context. It's like making sense of *Hamlet* from his charge to Ophelia, "Get thee to a nunnery."<sup>2</sup> Or isolating the single sentence of a homily that began, "In the 200 years of this parish the Jesuit Fathers have had but one idea." Today's Gospel is part and parcel of a whole chapter in Luke. That chapter deals with two weighty events: the end of Jerusalem and the end of the world. It is not at all clear that Jesus delivered this discourse at one sitting; it is more probable that Luke has put together in a single discourse sayings Jesus uttered at different times.

No matter. What Advent's opening liturgy highlights is a fascinating wedding of two "days": tomorrow and today. Tomorrow has two acts: one soon, the other in the distance. Luke's Jesus has just foretold the "end" of Jerusalem. Jerusalem's Jews "will fall by the edge of the sword [or] be carried off captive" and scattered among the nations; the city itself "will be trampled upon by pagans" (v. 24). Now he moves on to another "end," "what is coming upon the world," "the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory" (vv. 26-27). Luke, unlike a good number of Christians, did not see this happening soon, right after the destruction of Jerusalem. He put a goodly distance between the two acts.

Then, if you recall, Jesus shifts the stress from tomorrow to today. How do you prepare for the Lord's coming? "Be on your guard!" (v. 34). Don't let anything dull your mind, so that you fail to recognize the signs that announce his coming. Jesus mentions several ways our sensibilities can be dulled: "indulgence and drunkenness and worldly cares" (v. 34); concretely, a grade-A hangover and excessive anxiety over the worries of life. Not that these exhaust the obstacles; but in point of fact Jesus and/or Luke apparently found them strikingly present in their communities.

II

Luke's Jesus is a lead-in to my second focus: today's Jesus. Luke's Jesus spoke of "signs" that would herald the coming of Christ "with power and great glory" (Lk 21:27). Let's move on to our own "signs of the times." What does that phrase mean, "signs of the times"? I mean "the main characteristics and events, including secular ones, of each age and place, which reveal the actions and will of God in history, and in peoples."<sup>3</sup> Now different people see different signs. Much depends on who you are, where you are, your background, your interests, your hurts, your way of reading Scripture. Here, with you, I stress one significant characteristic of our age explicitly exploited by the Second Vatican Council: the "split between the faith which many profess and their daily lives." That split, the Council declared,

deserves to be counted among the more serious errors of our age. Long since, in the Old Testament, the prophets struggled strenuously against this scandal; and far more so did Jesus Christ himself in the New Testament threaten it with heavy punishments.<sup>4</sup>

Now that split is rarely proclaimed more thunderously than in the way Christians fall under the challenge hurled in the First Letter of John: "If anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother [or sister] in need, yet closes his heart against him [or her], how does God's love abide in him?" (1 Jn 3:17). It is simply a concrete application of what Jesus called the "second great commandment": You shall love your sisters and brothers—every human being—at least as much as you love yourself (cf. Mt 22:39). The Lord demanded much the same of Israel, demanded that Israelites love not only fellow Israelites but the stranger as well: "You shall love [them] as you love yourself" (Lev 19:18, 34).

For Christians and Jews, I suggest strongly, our most significant signs (not the only ones) have to do with justice. Not simply ethical justice: giving to each man and woman what they deserve because they have rights which can be proven by philosophy or have been written into law. Ethical justice is indeed important: Simply as a human person, I must respect the rights of others. But for a Christian that is only a beginning. The justice of which Scripture speaks—the Old Testament prophets and the Gospels—makes a stronger demand, a richer demand. When Micah thundered, "What does the Lord require of you but to act justly, love steadfastly?" (Mic 6:8), what did he have in mind?

The just man, the just woman, have a covenant with God, a pact with their Lord. This covenant demands that we treat other humans as God wants them treated, as our brothers and sisters, as images of God. The Jews were to father the fatherless and feed the stranger, not because the orphan and the outsider deserved it, but because this was the way God had acted with them. A text in Deuteronomy is telling: "Love the sojourner [the stranger, the resident alien], for you were sojourners [strangers] in the land of Egypt" (Deut 10:19). Their justice was to image not the justice of man and woman, but the justice of God, was to be an expression of love. Not to execute justice was not to worship God.

This is the tradition that sparked the ministry of Jesus. Take Jesus' proclamation of his mission in the synagogue at Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because [the Spirit] has anointed me to preach good news to the poor, to proclaim release to the captives, to set at liberty the oppressed" (Lk 4:18; Isa 61:1-2).

But to a dismayingly degree we are not doing so. The issues are discouragingly many—AIDS and sexual abuse, inferior education and inaccessible healthcare, poverty and ecology, coke and crack, racism and women's issues, and so on into the night. But, with Christmas and



the Christ Child close at hand once again, a sign of the times that agonizes me is America's children. In a 1990 message to the World Summit for Children, John Paul II struck us squarely between the eyes: "...in the Christian view, our treatment of children becomes a measure of our fidelity to the Lord himself."<sup>5</sup>

And yet, each day in our fair land 110 babies die before their first birthday; each day nine children die from guns; each day almost 2000 teenagers drop out of school. Among industrial nations the United States ranks 19th in keeping babies alive, 28th if you look only at black-  
-ant mortality. In 1990 13 million children lived below the poverty line. Half of all divorced fathers never see their children; two-thirds fail  
-ay child support.<sup>6</sup> And if you cast your eyes beyond our shores, do you know how many children are likely to die in this decade alone,  
most from diseases we know how to prevent? 150 million. One hundred and fifty...million!

Each of these children is the Christ Child. Not indeed physically, but in a sense deeper still. Each is a human shaped of love by a creator God, for whom the Son of God died of love on a bloody cross. Each is one of the innocents over whom Rachel wept, refused to be comforted "because they are not" (Jer 31:15; Mt 2:18). Oh yes, you can argue, debate, complain, rage: Why does God allow what God can prevent? But while we are struggling with that question, with the problem of evil, we have a more pressing problem: Why do we allow what we can prevent? Not everything—an earthquake in Guatemala, a landslide in the Philippines, brother bloodying brother in Yugoslavia. But so much, so very much.

Luke's Jesus rages against "dissipation," against literal "drunkenness" (Lk 21:34), Christians of his time soused out of their socks. But implicit in this is a broader warning to disciples of Christ: Don't get so intoxicated by the attractions of this world that your mind is dulled and you cannot read the signs of the times. Be aware with the eyes of the spirit, so that you can see Christ however he comes—Christ riding high on the clouds of heaven at the end of time, Christ crossing your way each day.

### III

This summons up my third point: you and me. What intoxications can blur our vision? Their name is legion. Still, experts highlight today a big word: consumerism. In simple language, all too many Americans are bitten by the consumer bug: We like it, we buy it; we no longer like it, we throw it away. What does it do to others? We overconsume and someone does not have enough—all too often the utterly dependent, our children.

Simply from my own experience—not from irrefutable statistics—I suggest that few of us who live fairly comfortably have nothing to confess in this regard. What does it do to us? John Paul II put it bluntly: It makes us slaves, "slaves of 'possession' and of immediate gratification—no other horizon than multiplying or continually replacing what we already own with what is better."<sup>7</sup> It is the cult of "having"—not evil in itself, evil only if having does not serve "being," does not serve caring. Only if Imelda Marcos' 3000 pairs of shoes never warm a bare foot other than her own, if a youngster is ready to kill for a Reebok, if I never listen to Christ chiding me: "I was hungry, and you ordered reindeer with lingonberry sauce. I was thirsty, and you hoisted your fifth Bud Lite. I was naked, and you bought the best in clergy gray. I was a beggar, and you passed me by like a leper. I was sick in a lonely hospital, and you were 'overcommitted.' I was in prison, and you debated capital punishment."

Christ of the first Christmas is no longer a child; he has grown up; he has risen from the dead. But his place is taken, the manger is filled, by other Christs. What will I see when I kneel before the Christmas crib? It is no longer a cherubic little Christ that is enfolded in Mary's warm arms. It is an infant born with AIDS; a child with Down's syndrome who will never really grow up; a wee one riddled with bullets from a passing car; a black Christ abandoned by her father; a brown Christ bloated from hunger, eyes empty of hope. Perhaps the crib is empty, because a fetus was not allowed to reach it.

Am I spoiling your Christmas? Only if Christmas is a refuge from reality. Only if Advent casts off its violet hue, its summons to repent, to change our way of looking at people and things. Only if you and I ceaselessly see the Baptist's whiplash hurled exclusively at first-century Jews, not at 20th century Christians: "You brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath that is coming? Produce fruits worthy of repentance" (Lk 3:7–8)—that is, show by your actions, by your conduct, that new life, God's life, has sprung up in you.

Only if you fail to realize that the most Christian of gifts, the most human of gifts, is to bring hope into the eyes of the hopeless. There is no joy comparable to that.

After all, isn't this why the Son of God took our flesh, shivered in Mary's arms, had no place whereon to rest his head? He took what is ours, our flesh and blood, only to give us what is his, a share in his Godlife. Advent is a strong reminder, in the rhetoric of the Baptist, that Christmas calls for conversion, a fresh turning to God not simply from the age-old litany of sins that stamp us as children of Eve and Adam, but from the blindness and unawareness that keep us from seeing the image of God in each human crucified.

Good friends and former colleagues: A sympathetic Jew once told us Christians gently but firmly:

We [Jews] must...question, in the light of the Bible, whether the message of the Old Testament which the New Testament claims has been fulfilled, has in fact been fulfilled in history, in the history lived and suffered by us and our ancestors. And here, my dear Christian readers, we give a negative reply. We can see no kingdom and no peace and no redemption.<sup>8</sup>

Now my theology can counter such absolutes with defensible distinctions. The Church on earth is not identical with the full-fledged kingdom; peace is not primarily the absence of war but "God's love poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us" (Rom 5:5); redemption is an ongoing process only initiated, not consummated, on Calvary. Still, the agonies that assail crucified hearts across the world are not allayed by distinctions. When the Jew, the Muslim, the atheist, the agnostic look at us, is their instinctive reaction "See how these Christians love one another—see how they love us"?

Which brings me back to the children—in Iraq, in the Sudan, in Yugoslavia, in Cambodia, on our city streets. Where is the kingdom, where the peace, where the redemption for the 150 million children who will perish needlessly this decade? Frankly, I don't know. But I do know that the Advents from 1991 to 2000 will hardly prove a prelude to Christmas unless we initiate a massive effort to "save the children." If the numbers stagger you, dispirit you, remember Mother Teresa descending on D.C. some years ago. Announcing her intention to feed the District's hungry and house its homeless, she was confronted by a cynical politician: "Mother Teresa, there are thousands of these! How are

you going to feed and house thousands?" Her answer was classic Teresa: "One by one."

Rarely has the Gospel injunction of Jesus been more appropriate for you and me: "Go and do likewise." Is it sheer fantasy, "off the wall," to take as our patron, our example, the Bethlehem Jew who gave a segment of his stable to the first of countless Christs, and unwittingly helped initiate a kingdom not of this world, a peace that passes understanding, and our redemption from sin and Satan and, especially, self?

*When Christ Meets Christ (c) 1993 Paulist Press.*

## **First Sunday of Advent, cycle C**

By Don L. Fischer

**SCRIPTURE: Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

The readings for this first Sunday of Advent are very important for the beginning of the church year. They focus on three things: First, on the promise; second, on attentiveness; and third, on instruction. What it seems to me is that these readings are inviting us to be prepared for the work of this coming year. We know that the word "Advent" means "the coming." We are really talking about the Incarnation, Christ coming into the world: God becoming one of us, God entering into our lives in a unique way that still baffles all of us when we stop and think about it. How is it that this God chose to come to walk the same walk that we walk? There are many reasons to imagine why God did it, but the one that gives me great comfort is that he wanted us to believe him so much. There is something so believable about someone who has been in our shoes, who knows what this life is like. He doesn't just talk about it; he lives it and shows us how to do it.

This great coming of Jesus into the world is also an invitation for us to know what it means to come into his kingdom. That's what Jesus came into the world to do: To establish a kingdom, a way of life, a way of seeing. It's amazing how this story unfolds over and over again - from generation to generation, from individual to individual. All of us are called to live out this story. It's so important that we do it well. It's so important that we really enter into the real work. That's the best description I can give you of healthy religion - that it really helps us to enter into the real work. The promise of this real work that we hear of in the first reading is that there will be a place of great peace, a place of great wholeness. Someone will come into the world (God has always promised this) and God promises through the words of Jeremiah that this someone will come to lead us. This person who comes to lead us is leading us into something wonderful: The promised place, the promised land. We start our year by recognizing that there will be a time when we will all dwell secure, when there will be a unity, a kind of oneness. All of the things we deeply long for will happen. It's a way of starting off the year recognizing that the promise God is making to us, the ultimate gift he is giving us, is aimed at getting us to the best place. I love the whole notion of the mission of Jesus, which is to give us great confidence that this will happen. If we want it, it will happen to us. It's not something we have to fight for, work for, or earn. It's something we must receive.

Jesus was much less likely to demand that people do something and much more likely to invite people to receive something. He wants you and me to receive life. The promise of this life that he gives us is something I think that all of us deeply know - it's in the heart of our very being - it's that sense of things being a certain way that feels really right, really good. That's the promise God is making to all of us. Paul, in the second reading, is a great example of leadership in what we call the kingdom. He has a leadership that is so like the Christ. The leadership we see in Paul is something we don't always encounter in the people who lead us, be they parents or teachers, priests or ministers. What we see in this particular figure is not that cold and distant person who demands we do something, but rather we see a man who is deeply drawn to, close to, in love with his people. Paul speaks in language that is almost embarrassing about the way he loves his people and wants to be with them. How much he wants them to have life! And how much he misses them. He's saying that out of this love he has for them, there is a way of life that brings so much peace and joy. Because Paul loves the people so much, he wants them to receive this way of life. It's interesting that the motive in Paul (a great preacher and teacher) is not so much right order, and everybody doing what they are supposed to do - but the real energy that flows out of this man is a deep love for his people. He wants them so much to make progress. He wants them to love each other as he loves them, as he knows God loves them. When Paul encourages them to make greater progress, he says, "I want you to pay attention to the instruction we gave you in the Lord Jesus Christ. That instruction is so important."

Here's where we get to the heart of what the gospel is trying to say to us: God does promise us life. And he gives us instructions as to how we are to achieve life. Then comes the tough part. This kingdom Jesus came to establish does not come easy. It does not come cheap. It does not come without real struggle and effort. That's what I think the gospel is trying to point out. Jesus is talking to his disciples in these passages of Luke from the standpoint that he is at the end of his career with them. He is at the end of his ministry with them. He has been working with them, and he knows that they don't really grasp fully everything that he's saying to them. He knows they will need the Spirit to help them. That's why we have the Ascension into heaven and the descent of the Holy Spirit. We know that through the redemption, Jesus had to break a barrier that kept people from really being open to this gift of the Spirit so that they could cooperate with Spirit and move in the direction of life. As Jesus is describing the kingdom to the disciples and the work they have before them, he is also caught up in something he knows these men will experience particularly in their lifetimes. It will be a really difficult thing for them. The temple was so valuable, so important to these people. It was a sign of God's presence. It was his stability. It was his strength.

Solomon had a temple built in Jerusalem that was not very elaborate or large. A second temple was built after Solomon. Herod the Great built this second temple. It took eighty years to finish it. Almost ten years before it was done, Jesus walked within its walls. It was an extraordinary edifice. Think of all the major architectural monuments we have in the world today that create awe in people and just roll them into one place, in this city of Jerusalem. By our way of categorizing cities, Jerusalem is a small place today, but once it was a large world center. The people were very impressed with the temple; it was so awesome to them. Jesus knew that what was going to happen to this temple because the people who had formed it had created it so out of sync with what God really wanted it to be. Jesus would say: "It's not a place of life; it's a place that robs you of life. It's not a place that my Father takes joy in. It's not my Father's house anymore. What you are doing in it is somehow against my Father. It's supposed to be my Father's house." We see this temple in trouble. What happens in the kingdom Jesus is trying to establish for us, the awareness that Jesus wants us to have of this kingdom, is that there is a real direct cause and effect to the way we choose to live. If we choose to do the things that bring us to life, we receive life. If we choose to take the road that leads us to rob people of life, we are going to be robbed of life. An almost-simplistic way of understanding the way evil breeds and multiplies. It's almost like the destiny of this great edifice that represents the focus of the religion of the time was destined for destruction. It would be destroyed, and it was destroyed. The Gentiles, whom Jesus was turned over to by the leaders of the temple, came back to destroy the temple. It's so ironic. And so, what Jesus was preparing his disciples for was a radical change in the system that they knew. It would all fall apart. Jesus knew that would be extraordinarily difficult for people.

The radical change that comes over us as we move into this kingdom is the most difficult thing. There are things about it that feel like everything is falling apart. There are things about it that create a lot of anxiety and fear. Listen to Jesus when he speaks to his disciples and says, "There will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars." That's an interesting statement because people didn't have the means to determine the weather and the configuration of the solar system that we have today. They didn't have television. One of the things that they looked to for information about the weather, about directions, was the heavens. They looked to the sky. The stars had a major role in terms of giving people direction. There was that wonderful tradition that each person had their own individual star in the heavens, and each person had to follow that star to follow their destiny. That was the origin of the Star of Bethlehem. To be out of sync with your destiny, with your star, was a disaster. Disaster means to separate from your star. In a sense, the religious leaders had disconnected from the destiny that God longed for them to have. It created a disaster, and things fell apart. That's what Jesus is trying to describe so often at the end of his ministry. When Jesus speaks about the future, he tells his disciples that they will be dealing with some things that are going to be extraordinarily difficult.

Jesus is really saying two things at once: That the world they are moving into, the world they will be dealing with, is going to have a lot of problems. Jesus could be saying to each of us that the year that is coming could have a lot of problems in it. A lot of pain. A lot of suffering. A lot of change. A lot of things that feel like earthquakes, famines and plagues. And yet, at the same time, Jesus is saying to us: "I want you to trust through all of that. I want you to absolutely trust me through that. In the process, I want you to be as loving, as kind, as patient as you can be to one another." I think that's really difficult to do. The grace that God gives us, this gift called God coming and dwelling inside of us that we so focus on during this season of the Incarnation is the only chance we've got. This is the only chance we have to connect with him. It's the only chance we have in order to really get into the work of living in this kingdom. When Jesus says we should pray constantly for the strength to escape "whatever is in prospect," he's telling us to be in touch with this greater power outside of us, that is, in another sense, inside of us. We draw this power into us which sustains us and protects us from what might harm us. Then Jesus says, "I want you to pay attention." That's an interesting thing. Paying attention has everything to do with seeing things not just as they are but seeing inside of them and seeing through them the meaning of what's really going on. The challenge of really being a person in this kingdom Jesus has come to establish is to recognize that all things are working together for something extraordinarily good. I don't know why evil exists in the world. I don't know why when evil gets into something, it seems that one of the ways in which it often works itself through is that it destroys a lot of things before it's ever really exposed for what it is. I think of how that works in cultures. I have seen it in my friends' lives. I've seen it in my own life. You make mistakes, and you continue to make them - and you pay an enormous price for that. But until you really feel the pain of what your choices have caused you, until you really taste that destructive side of it all, it's very difficult to change.

The kingdom Jesus has come to establish - a kingdom of great love and peace - is at the same time a kingdom of great turmoil. It has a lot of things that are anything but smooth and balanced. Isn't it interesting that whenever anyone sees things that are out of balance, they rush into an oversimplification of the words that Jesus spoke at the end of his ministry. They say, "Oh, this is the final times. This is the end times." Or even worse, any time things seem really difficult (something like the destruction of the temple, which was comparable to the destruction of everything you believed in as a religious person) we have to recognize that those things are very, very essential. They are part of the process. They are part of the plan. "By patient endurance," Jesus often says, "you will save your life." Why else would Jesus make such a big deal of not being afraid and being patiently enduring and hanging in there, trusting and believing, unless the plan that he created is so easily misunderstood or not clearly seen. What a horrible thing for God to be working as carefully as he does with the skill of a surgeon who has a scalpel on your brain, carefully planning all of these things so that they somehow bring about something wonderful - and we are screeching and screaming, "I don't think this is fair. I don't think this should be happening. I don't think this is the way it's supposed to go. If God were really in charge, everything would be so much easier and so much better. And so much more the way I want it to be." Our challenge is to trust, to be open to the mystery of the way this kingdom unfolds. And to know that somehow in the process of the kingdom unfolding, there will be all kinds of difficult, disturbing, disastrous things. But there is something unique about the human being who possesses, in the midst of things not being the way they would like them to be, a mysterious calm. What a witness that person is to a world often wracked by anxiety and fear! That's the kingdom God is inviting us into: A kingdom of peace, a kingdom of great promise, a kingdom where we are invited to simply be there and experience it.

## **First Sunday of Advent, cycle C**

By Bryan M. Cones

Today's beginning of a new liturgical year and a new season of Advent requires much of those who prepare liturgy. The shortness of the season, along with the competition of the secular "holiday" festivities, threatens to make Advent a bit of a blur. Of course, Jesus' words of warning throw a bit of cold water on any premature celebration. Advent, our time of expectation for Christ's return, is serious business, and requires our careful, prayerful attention.

The first Advent challenge is often the Advent wreath. Although the Book of Blessings (chapter 34) provides an order for blessing the wreath during Mass on the First Sunday of Advent, it generally discourages anything more than lighting the candles of the wreath on subsequent Sundays (BB, 1513). A possible alternative is to bless the wreath during a separate service, perhaps Evening Prayer or a service of the word, and let Advent's eucharist stand alone. In any case, the wreath should not distract in size, placement or use from the eucharistic action that is the purpose of our Sunday gathering.

Whatever the decision about the wreath, it is important to carefully plan the season as an integrated whole. A single penitential rite--Form C, ii or iii, would work nicely--along with strong, simple music will help the assembly attend to Advent's challenging message to prepare "to stand before the Son of Man" (gospel). Such careful preparation will focus the assembly's prayer and direct its members' attention to the full meaning of this marvelous, if short, season.

## 317 O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

Em Am Em

1. O come, O come, Em - man - u - el,  
 2. O come, O Wis - dom from on high,  
 3. O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
 4. O come, O Rod of Jes - se's stem,  
 5. O come, O Key of Dav - id, come,

Am Em

And ran - som cap - tive Is - ra - el,  
 Who or - ders all things might - i - ly;  
 Who to your tribes on Si - nai's height  
 From ev - 'ry foe de - liv - er them  
 And o - pen wide our heav'n - ly home;

Am Em Bm

That mourns in lone - ly ex - ile here  
 To us the path of knowl - edge show,  
 In an - cient times once gave the law,  
 That trust your might - y power to save,  
 Make safe the way that leads on high,

Am D G

Un - til the Son of God ap - pear.  
 And teach us in her ways to go.  
 In cloud, and maj - es - ty, and awe.  
 And give them vic - t'ry o'er the grave.  
 And close the path to mis - er - y.

D Em Bm Am Em

Re - joice! Re - joice! Em - man - u - el

G C Am Bm Em

Shall come to you, O Is - ra - el.

6. O come, O Dayspring from on high  
 And cheer us by your drawing nigh;  
 Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
 And death's dark shadow put to flight.

7. O come, Desire of nations, bind  
 In one the hearts of humankind;  
 O bid our sad divisions cease,  
 And be for us our King of Peace.

Text: *Veni, veni Emmanuel*; Latin 9th C.; tr. by John M. Neale, 1818-1866, alt.

Tune: VENI VENI EMMANUEL, LM with refrain; Mode I; adapt. by Thomas Helmore, 1811-1890; acc. by Richard Proulx, b. 1937, © 1975, GIA Publications, Inc.



## First Sunday of Advent

**Leader:** God come to my assistance. **R:** Lord, make haste to help me.

**Leader:** Glory to the Father... **R:** As it was in the beginning is now and  
Ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

**Sing:** O Come, O Come Emmanuel

**Antiphon 1:** Proclaim the good news among the nations: Our God will come to save us.

### *Psalm 141: 1-9*

I have called to you, Lord; hasten to help me! Hear my voice when I cry to you.  
Let my prayer arise before you like incense, the raising of my hands like an evening oblation.

Set, O Lord, a guard over my mouth; keep watch at the door of my lips!  
Do not turn my heart to things that are wrong, to evil deeds with those who are sinners.

Never allow me to share in their feasting. If a good man strikes or reproves me it is kindness:  
But let the oil of the wicked not anoint my head. Let my prayer be ever against their malice.

Their princes were thrown down by the side of the rock; then they understood that my words  
were kind. As a millstone is shattered to pieces on the ground, so their bones were strewn at the  
mouth of the grave.

To you, Lord God, my eyes are turned: in you I take refuge; spare my soul!  
From the trap they laid for me keep me safe; keep me from the snares of those who do evil.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

### **Psalm Prayer:**

Lord, from the rising of the sun to its setting your name is worthy of all praise. Let our  
prayer come like incense before you. May the lifting up of our hands be as an evening sacrifice  
acceptable to you, Lord our God.

**Antiphon 1:** Proclaim the good news among the nations: Our God will come to save us.

**Antiphon 2:** Know that the Lord is coming and with him all his saints; that day will dawn with  
a wonder Light, alleluia.

*Psalm 142*

With all my voice I cry to the Lord, with all my voice I entreat the Lord.  
I pour out my trouble before him; I tell him all my distress while my spirit faints within me;  
But you, O Lord, know my path.

On the way where I shall walk they have hidden a snare to entrap me. Look on my right and see:  
There is not one who takes my part. I have no means of escape, not one who cares for my soul.

I cry to you, O Lord. I have said: "You are my refuge, all I have left in the land of the living."  
Listen then to my cry for I am in the depths of distress.

Rescue me from those who pursue me for they are stronger than I. Bring my soul out of this  
prison and then I shall praise your name. Around me the just will assemble because of  
your goodness to me.

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

**Psalm Prayer:**

Lord, we humbly ask for your goodness. May you help us to hope in you, and give us  
a share with your chosen ones in the land of the living.

**Antiphon 2:** Know that the Lord is coming and with him all his saints; that day will dawn with  
a wonderful Light, alleluia.

**Antiphon 3:** The Lord will come with mighty power; all mortal eyes shall see him.

***Philippians 2: 6-11***

Though he was in the form of God, Jesus did not deem equality with God something to be  
grasped at.

Rather, he emptied himself and took the form of a slave, being born in the likeness of men.

He was known to be of human estate, and it was thus that he humbled himself,  
obediently accepting even death, death on a cross.

Because of this, God highly exalted him and bestowed on him  
the name above every other name,

So that at Jesus' name every knee must bend in the heavens, on the earth, and under the earth  
and every tongue proclaim to the glory of God the Father that JESUS CHRIST IS LORD!

Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

As it was in the beginning is now and ever shall be world without end. Amen.

**Antiphon 3:** The Lord will come with mighty power; all mortal eyes shall see him.

**Reading:**

*Thessalonians 5: 23-24*

May the God of peace make you perfect in holiness. May he preserve you whole and entire, spirit, soul, and body, irreproachable at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls us is trustworthy, therefore he will do it.

**Responsory:**

**Leader:** Lord, show us your mercy and love.

**R:** Lord, show us your mercy and love.

**Leader:** And grant us your salvation,

**R:** your mercy and love.

**Leader:** Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit,

**R:** Lord, show us your mercy and love.

**Intercessions:**

**Leader:**

Jesus Christ is the joy and happiness of all who look forward to his coming. Let us call upon him and say:

**R: Come, Lord and do not delay!**

In joy we wait for your coming, come, Lord Jesus:

**R: Come, Lord and do not delay!**

You created the world and all who live in it, come to redeem the work of your hands:

**R: Come, Lord and do not delay!**

You did not hesitate to become man, subject to death, come to free us from the power of death:

**R: Come, Lord and do not delay!**

Your came to gives us life to the full, come and give us unending life.

**R: Come, Lord and do not delay!**

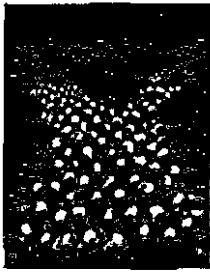
**Let us pray:**

Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your Word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow In love, that the dawn of his coming may find up rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.

**Leader:** May the Lord bless you, protect you from all evil and bring you to everlasting life. Amen.

**Come, Lord Jesus!**





## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

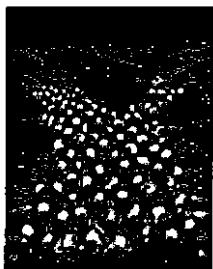
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

*my attitude toward my brothers + sisters has surely changed. I see everyone now and I look for the good in them. I believe I have learned what true Charity is.*



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

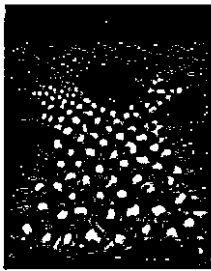
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

*I have made lot of friends in this community  
after coming the St Barnabas for many years.  
I could count the people I knew from church  
on one hand to include the priest. now I know  
a lot of wonderful people.*



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

AND at the same time

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

Some of the material presenter I just felt I  
needed a deeper meaning. - It may just be but  
that is how I saw & feel. ALL in ALL I did learn  
some new meaning to words. It was good to  
hear people share and see their faces.  
Good Food - Great music.  
Thank you Sister



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

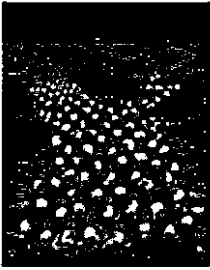
Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

You asked if we used any of what we learned. Yes as a teacher of 4th graders I used most of the material and knowledge to prepare my class for Sunday. Thank you very much



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

I have felt the need to set apart time  
to study and to renew my spiritual faith.

---

---

---

---



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

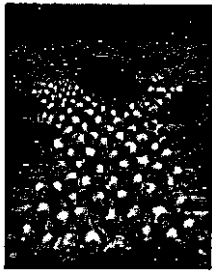
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

I'VE LEARNED TO PASS IT ON TO MY WIFE AND CHILDREN!  
AND ALSO TO SOME OF MY CO-WORKERS



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

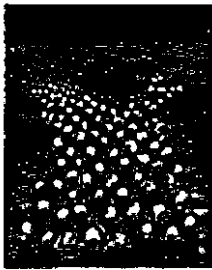
Excellent  
5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

*I improved my experience to work with people.*

*Enjoy this class - John Lentz*



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

✓ **Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	<u>4</u>	5

⊕ **How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	<u>4</u>	5

Ω **What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**  
**Additional comments:**

✓ I THINK THE ROOM COULD HAVE BEEN BIGGER FOR SPEAKING REASONS TO SEE THE BOARD BETTER AND HAVE MORE COMFORTABLE "LEG ROOM".  
⊕ THE PROGRAM COULD BE IMPROVED BY ALLOWING MORE FAITH SHARING - TESTIMONY FOR MORE INTIMACY B/W THE STUDENTS AND MORE OPENNESS.  
Ω TO KNOW INSIDE THAT NOT ONLY GOD IS DEPENDING ON YOU BUT OTHERS TOO. THAT BY CHOOSING BIBLE STUDY YOU CHOOSE GOD OVER EVIL AND HIS WILL IS DONE BY SIMPLE DECISIONS LIKE THESE. ALSO GOT TO KNOW PEOPLE OF ST. BONAVENTURE - CREATING A BEAUTIFUL BOND AND A FEELING OF TOGETHERNESS. THANK YOU SISTER MARY SOAD LOVE AND THANK YOU GOD - FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. Dr. K. C.





# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving  
1

Average  
2

Good  
3

Well Done  
4

Excellent  
5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

Information was given to me that I  
~~did~~ did not know existed. Questions were  
answered. I was left with wanting more  
of this. Sister Mary John is very  
knowledgeable and very enthusiastic.



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

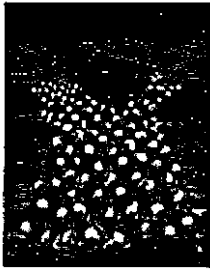
To me I learned alot, To understand and talk about  
our bible.

---

---

---

---



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

My understanding of how to read the Bible has truly made a difference in understanding several scriptures.

Thank You



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

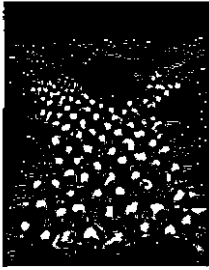
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	<u>5</u>

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

THE IMPORTANCE OF KNOWING AND READING MY BIBLE  
IN ORDER TO BECOME A BETTER CATHOLIC, TO  
KNOW WHY WE ARE CATHOLIC, IN ORDER TO LOVE  
JESUS WITHOUT LIMITATIONS, KNOW GOD BETTER  
AND HIS MOTHER THE MOTHER OF ALL.



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

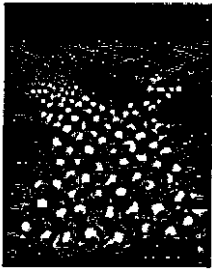
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

GOD TOUCHED ME VERY Deeply  
THROUGH HIS WORD - PART OF ME WAS HEALED  
SPIRITUALLY - THAT NEEDED IT HEALED BADLY  
ALL GLORY TO GOD AND JESUS OUR  
SAVIOR  
GOD BLESS SISTER MARY JOHN



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



# EVALUATION

## *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

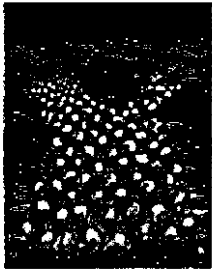
**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	(5)

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

A discipline to make sure Bible Study  
is part of Thursday evening



## EVALUATION

### *The Gospel of Mark*



**Were program objectives clear and realistic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the material presented relevant and valuable to you?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the presenter enthusiastic?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Did the presenters make an effort to make you feel comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the program schedule well planned?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Will you be able to apply what you have learned in your work and personal life?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**Was the room comfortable?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**How do you rate the program overall?**

Needs Improving	Average	Good	Well Done	Excellent
1	2	3	4	5

**What attitudes or behaviors have changed as a result of participation in this class?**

**Additional comments:**

---

---

---

---

---

---



# ST. BONAVENTURE CHURCH

This certificate is awarded to

*Janie Gatica*

in recognition of valuable contributions to our

BIBLE STUDY CLASS (8 HRS)

*Sister Mary John Trevino, MCDP*

Signature

*Sister Mary T. Phelan, CCS*

Signature

*12/14/06*

Date

Date





# ST. BONAVENTURE CHURCH

This certificate is awarded to

*Araceli Orozco*

in recognition of valuable contributions to our

BIBLE STUDY CLASS (16 HRS)

*Sister Mary John Previno, MCDP*

Signature

*12/14/06*

Date

*Sister Mary T. Phelan, CSM*

Signature

Date





# ST. BONAVENTURE CHURCH

This certificate is awarded to

*Arturo Reyes, Jr.*

in recognition of valuable contributions to our

BIBLE STUDY CLASS (6 HRS)

*Sister Mary John Previno, MSCP*

Signature

*Sister Mary T. Phelan, CCS*

Signature

*12/14/06*

Date

Date



# ST. BONAVENTURE CHURCH

This certificate is awarded to

*Rosemary Reyes*

in recognition of valuable contributions to our

BIBLE STUDY CLASS (8 HRS)

*Sister Mary John Trivino, MCDP*

Signature

*12/14/06*

Date

*Sister Mary T. Phelan, CSM*

Signature

Date

