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THE CHURCH OF SAINT BONIFACE

First Sunday of Advent

December 1, 2019



*"So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour
 you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."*

(Matthew 24, 44)

From the Desk of the Pastor

Sunday Reflection: December 1

Do not let your house be broken into. (Matthew 24, 43)

In 2012 we experienced a major ice storm that was unexpected especially in its impact. At the time I was living at Saint Joseph's rectory in Leicester Massachusetts. Everything came to a standstill and we were all much unprepared. No water, no current — this means food will go bad, you cannot cook, and of course no television and no cell phone (how could we survive without these?!). My brother in Tewksbury told me it was not so bad out there (he had power and water), so I decided to drive up and stay there a few days. The roads were a mess and dangerous with the ice. The storm brought back real memories of the Worcester Blizzard of 1978 to many of the older folks.

Even though we might be so 'advanced', Mother Nature throws us a curveball every now and then.

The readings this First Sunday of Advent are about preparedness, readiness or staying awake. The Floods of Noah are not on the way and our houses are pretty well fortified, so then, what preparedness are we talking about? It is a spiritual preparedness, an attitude of living or 'an interior recall' asked of us. As the birth of Christ comes, how prepared are we spiritually for it? Even though Jesus comes in the future, He is already here in our midst. Do we recognize this? Let our *today*, or *now* prepare our *tomorrow* (the coming of Jesus). Live like Jesus is already here.

Matthew writes his Gospel with a crisis of faith in the community in which he lived. When he speaks about a "house broken into" he means: community, family, Church or spirit/morale. The Christians of Matthew's time waited so long for the second coming of Jesus and they got fed up. They lost interest in Jesus and his teaching. Their morale and spirit began to fade. They did not care anymore.

In addition they faced persecution and ostracizing by the largely pharisaic Jewish officials who disliked the Jesus movement and its followers. They were excommunicated from Judaism and seemed to have nowhere to go. They had to make difficult choices; were they to remain faithful to Jesus or their traditional Jewish laws and traditions? Matthew urges them to remain firm and yes, make the painful choice to stay with Jesus. They must maintain a strong witness and authenticity of life in such a volatile environment. Maintain unity and charity and concern for one another in their communities. "Abide in Christ," he says.

Saint Paul has similar issues on his mind as he writes to the Romans. "Do not give up upright conduct," he urges. When you choose to follow Christ, you choose to live differently.

What does all this imply for you and me? How might my parish community, my church, my Christian family, my personal life truly reflect my belief, my faith values? Does the spirit of Jesus truly abide in my discernment, choices and decisions? When has it not been the case and why? Do you easily conform or give in?

Advent is a time of revamping our Christian identity and living up to what it stands for *now*, not *tomorrow*.

Have a Blessed week in the Lord!

~ Fr. Anthony



Catholicism Video Series

presented by Bishop Robert Barron (Word of Fire ministries)

The Series will be offered on the first three

Sundays of Advent: Dec 1, 8, 15 2019

Time: 9:15-10:15AM | Location: Parish Hall

Catholicism is your story! But what is this story? How is it or has it been celebrated throughout the world? How has it been told? You will be surprised by the presentations in this series. They are well done and you might learn something new about your faith. This story might even put you on fire again to tell **Your Story!**

Saint Boniface Church

817 Massachusetts Avenue, Lunenburg, MA 01462

Parish Office: 978-582-4008 email: stbonifaceparish@verizon.net

Discover St. Boniface ~ Visit our website: www.StBoniface-lunenburg.org

Parish Office Hours

Monday / Wednesday / Thursday 9:00 AM – 5:00 PM (closed 12:00 – 1:00 PM)



The Celebration of the Eucharist

Sunday: 8:00 AM & 10:30 AM

Saturday Vigil: 4:00 PM

Summer Sunday Mass schedule: 9:00 AM

(Memorial Day weekend through Labor Day weekend)

Weekday Masses: 8:00 AM, Wednesday/Thursday/Friday

SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION (Confession) Saturday 3:00 - 3:30 p.m. or by appointment.

SACRAMENT OF BAPTISM Adults are baptized at the Easter Vigil as part of the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Infant and child Baptisms are by arrangement.

FIRST EUCHARIST Preparation begins in grade one and includes classes, retreats, and home instruction. Children receive First Eucharist in grade two.

CONFIRMATION Our Confirmation program begins in the 9th grade; students are confirmed in the spring of the 10th grade. For young adults who have been baptized but not yet confirmed, contact the parish office.

SACRAMENT OF MATRIMONY It is the policy of the Diocese of Worcester that a couple should contact the parish at least one year prior to the anticipated date of their wedding to allow sufficient time to carry out the various steps of the marriage preparation process. It is important that arrangements be made with the church before plans are made with reception halls, caterers, etc.

ANNOINTING OF THE SICK Please call the parish office 978-582-4008 or email Fr. Anthony at stbonifaceparish@verizon.net or Nancy Cieri 978-582-6983 nancycieri@comcast.net to arrange these visits.

PRAYER LINE MINISTRY If you or someone you know needs prayers or if you would like to be a part of this ministry of those who pray for the needs of neighbors, please contact Sue Cote 978-582-0404 sj33@msn.com.

KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL #16480 *In Service to One. In Service to all.* The members meet in the Parish Hall on the first Wednesday of each month at 7 PM. Any Catholic men over 18 who are interested in joining the Knights should contact Grand Knight James Dijak (978-534-7956) or Deputy Grand Knight Peter Bak (978-403-5119), or you can email the Council at kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

| | | |
|--|--------------|--|
| Rev. Anthony Mpagi, Pastor | 978-582-4008 | stbonifaceparish@verizon.net |
| Jo-Anne Poirier, Administrative Assistant | 978-582-4008 | stbonifaceparish@verizon.net |
| Lucy Marcil, Religious Education Coordinator | 978-502-7993 | lmarcil419@gmail.com |
| Claire Garrity Neas, Music Ministry | 617-823-4237 | |
| Louise Nadeau, Sacristan | | |
| Jacque Cronin, Ministry Schedule | 978-582-7040 | jaccronin@comcast.net |
| Nina Charpentier, Dir. Early Childhood/PreK | 978-582-7110 | |

Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that so that we can stay in touch with you via email with faith formation news, notice of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more. Registration forms are available at the doors of the church or on our website.

Please note that you must be registered for at least six months before we can issue any verification of your status as a parishioner for godparent or sponsor letters.

| MASS INTENTIONS | | | |
|-----------------|--------|---------------------|--|
| Sat | Nov 30 | 4:00 pm | Michael Membrino, by his family |
| Sun | Dec 1 | 8:00 am 10:30 am | Irving & Jenny Paton, by Joan Conroy Our Parish Family |
| Sat | Dec 7 | 4:00 pm | Our Parish Family |
| Sun | Dec 8 | 8:00 am 10:30 am | Lawrence, Bernard & Joseph Paton, by Joan Conroy Our Parish Family |

GIVING TREE: Giving Tree tags are available on the trees at the back of the church. Please take a tag or two to help others in need. Unwrapped gifts should be placed in gift bags and returned by December 15. Instructions for each gift are on the back of the tags — be sure to attach the tag to the gift bag. As always, **thank you very much** for your generosity.



SOCIAL ACTION MINISTRY: Many thanks to all the parishioners who contributed to the food and supplies needed for last week's rotation at the Montachusett Interfaith Hospitality Network. There were five homeless families in the shelter last week. A special thanks to Laurene Broden, Carol Archambault, Claire Neas, Geri Gardner and Nancy Murray's girl scout troop for making dinner for the families. (Note: MIHN has changed its name to North Star.)

Job Opportunity:
Assistant to Campus Ministry and Coordinator of Community Outreach
 Anna Maria College in Paxton MA
 20 hr/week part-time
 The application can be found on our website:
www.annamaria.edu/human-resources/jobs
 Melissa LaNeve, Director of Campus Ministry

Advent Mission LET THERE BE LIGHT!

Friday, December 6 and Saturday, December 7

at Our Lady of the Lake

Featuring TV Star Frank Runyeon

www.runyeonproductions.com

- **Signs: The Gospel of John on Fri., Dec. 6 at 7pm**
- **The 3 ½ Stories of Christmas on Sat. afternoon, Dec. 7 at 1pm (matinee, great for families w/ children!)**
- **The Letter of James on Sat., Dec. 7 at 7pm.**

All are welcome!!

Questions? Call the parish office at 978-342-2978.

COLLECTION REPORT WEEKEND OF NOVEMBER 24, 2019

SUNDAY ORDINARY: \$2,067.00
 MAINTENANCE: 120.00
 FUEL: 50.00
 CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: 351.00
 OTHER: 24.00

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS: \$2,612.00

Thank you for your continued support!

GRAND ANNUAL APPEAL:

To date, 26 families have pledged \$26,300 toward our goal of \$50,000.

Thank you to everyone who signed up to provide a gift for rest home residents.

We remind you that wrapped gifts should be placed in the labeled bins near the side door no later than Wednesday, December 4. The Christmas party at the rest homes is Sunday, Dec. 8. If you wish join us, meet in the upper parking lot at 1:30 p.m. All ages welcome!

SOUNDS OF THE SEASON

The Montachusett Chorale will perform its holiday concert, "Sounds of the Season", on Sunday, December 8th at 2 pm in Tata Auditorium, Leominster City Hall, 25 West Street. This concert will benefit the Catholic Charities' Women's Recovery Program in Leominster. Tickets are \$12 in advance, \$15 at the door, under 18 admitted free. Tickets can be purchased in the Mayor's Office or on their website: montachusettchorale.org using Paypal. Pre-paid online tickets will be held at the

THIS ADVENT, PREPARE YOUR HEART (AND ADJUST YOUR VISION)

JAIME L. WATERS November 15, 2019

For many people, December is about preparing for Christmas: buying gifts, decorating trees and celebrating with family and friends. But the readings that begin Advent give us a different and more challenging starting place, reminding us that we must prepare not only our homes but our hearts for the arrival of Jesus Christ.

The first reading from the prophet Isaiah draws attention to the Lord's mountain in Jerusalem, Mount Zion. In Israel's history, mountains are often places of divine encounter and instruction; most notably Moses receives the law on Mount Sinai. While reflecting on Mount Zion, Isaiah describes it as an elevated focal point that guides people to "walk in the light of the Lord" (Is 2:5). Centuries later Paul writes to a community in Rome, "Let us then throw off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light" (Rom 13:12). Seeking to convince his audience to live lives inspired by Christ, Paul, like Isaiah, uses light as a metaphor for living justly. These texts remind us to orient our lives toward the Lord.

The Gospel reading from Matthew then talks about the necessity of preparation in order to orient our lives toward God. This kind of preparation stands in contrast to the comforting rituals of getting ready for the holiday season. Instead, Matthew depicts Jesus recalling a period filled with so much corruption and sin that the Lord destroyed the earth by flood (Gen 6:1-7; 7:11-24). Modern readers, like Matthew's ancient audience, are probably unnerved by hearing about tales of destruction past. Why does Advent have such an ominous start?

Even though Advent is leading up to the celebration of Jesus' birth, today's Gospel reading comes from the end of Matthew. Jesus tells the disciples to be vigilant for the parousia at the end of days, the second coming of Christ connected to a period of final judgment. Jesus declares that the disciples do not know when Christ will return, so they need to stay ready. In the liturgical context of Advent, this language reminds us to prepare for Christ's arrival not only at Christmas but at all times in our lives. The following chapter of Matthew gives guidance on how to prepare for the Lord.

In the famous scene of judgment in Matthew 25, Jesus tells his disciples that they have encountered him in the hungry, the thirsty, the stranger, the prisoner and all those in need: "Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me" (Mt 25:40).

To prepare for the Lord, we must realize that the Lord is already with us. We need not wait until Christmas or the end of days to encounter Christ. We should see Christ in all people, especially those who are most vulnerable and in need of mercy and love.

So, deck the halls, feast and be merry, but let us not forget that to truly prepare during this Advent season, we must be guided by the light of Christ and see Christ in the people we encounter in our daily lives.

Jaime L. Waters teaches Scripture at DePaul University in Chicago. She is an associate professor of Catholic studies.



Religious Education Reminders

- Our annual **BREAKFAST IN BETHLEHEM** is taking place on **Sunday, December 22** after the 8 a.m. Mass. We will take you back in time to the birth of Jesus. All students in Grades 1-9 will be participating in some aspect of the breakfast. This is a full pancake breakfast, free of charge, complete with a Christmas play. Hope to see you there!
- **NO CLASSES on December 29.** Classes for all students resume on January 5, 2020.

THE PERSPECTIVE OF JUSTICE

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT A
DECEMBER 1, 2019
GERALD DARRING

READING I: 2 ISAIAH 2:1-5

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 122:1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 6-7, 8-9

READING II: ROMANS 13:11-14

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 24:37-44

Preparing for Christ

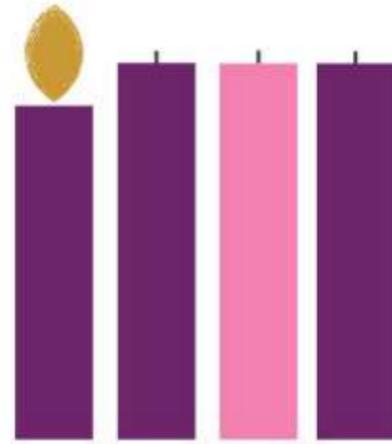
"The Son of Man is coming at the time you least expect (Mt 24:44)." That is a frightening prospect.

- What if Jesus comes when there are still nearly two and a half billion people living in countries where the annual per capita income is \$400 or less?
- When there are still about 40,000 people dying every day from hunger?
- When a billion people, one fifth of the human race, still do not have decent housing?
- When there are still 20 million Latin American children sleeping in the street?
- When there are still hundreds of millions of people without basic medical care?
- When one out of every four human beings still has no access to safe drinking water?
- When we are still burning down rain forests, depleting the ozone layer that protects us from the sun, depositing black crude oil along the delicate shoreline of the world, sending noxious gasses into the atmosphere so they return to earth as acid rain and pollute lakes and streams, playing games with radioactive materials that will be around to torture us for centuries?

"It is now the hour for us to wake from sleep (Rom 13:11)." The challenge to "beat our swords into plowshares" (Is 2:4) has been around for centuries, as have other biblical challenges to "cast off deeds of darkness (Rom 13:12)." The season of Advent is a time for us to wake ourselves up and begin preparing better for the coming of Christ.

Hope in the coming kingdom is already beginning to take root in the hearts of men. The radical transformation of the world in the paschal mystery of the Lord gives full meaning to the efforts of men, and in particular of the young, to lessen injustice, violence and hatred and to advance all together in justice, freedom, brotherhood and love.

Synod of Bishops, *Justice in the World*, 1971: 76



SAINTS OF THE DAY November 25 - 29



Blessed Rafal Chyliński

December 2. This Polish Conventual Franciscan served in the military, but felt the call to the vowed religious life. Rafal was known for his simple and candid sermons, for his generosity, as well as for his ministry in the confessional. People of all levels of society were drawn to the self-sacrificing way he lived out his religious profession and priestly ministry. He also played the harp, lute, and mandolin to accompany liturgical singing.

Blessed Rafal Chyliński | photo by Mody76



Saint Francis Xavier

December 3. Saint Francis Xavier was won over to Christ by the gentle persuasion of Saint Ignatius of Loyola. He then joined the Jesuits and soon after set off for the East, where he labored the rest of his life. Xavier was on his way to China when he died in 1552.

The miracles of St. Francis Xavier / Peter Paul Rubens



Saint John Damascene

December 4. Saint John Damascene was born in Damascus, but spent most of his life in a monastery near Jerusalem. Little is known about his life, but he is remembered as the last of the Eastern Church Fathers. He gained fame as a poet and an author.

Saint John Damaskinos | unknown



Saint Sabas

December 5. After an abusive childhood, Saint Sabas found refuge in a monastery, where he also found his vocation to the monastic life. Permitted to live as a hermit, Saint Sabas soon found others attracted to his way of life, and he eventually became the abbot of a monastic community. As a result, he is known as one of the founders of Eastern monasticism..

Relics of St. Sabbas the Sanctified in the Catholicon (main church) of the Eastern Orthodox Mar Saba monastery in Palestine | photo by adriaticus



Saint Nicholas

December 6. The absence of "hard historical facts" is not necessarily an obstacle to the popularity of saints, as the devotion to St. Nicholas shows. Both the Eastern and Western Churches honor him, and it is claimed that after the Blessed Virgin, he is the saint most pictured by Christian artists.

Patron of Sailors (Detail from a stained glass window in St Nicholas' cathedral in Newcastle) | photo by Lawrence OP | flickr