

The Church of Saint Boniface

December 13, 2020

Third Sunday of Advent



Who are you?

(John 1, 19)

UN-QUIET WORD FOR TODAY

Then, Who Are You?

What is your full name? How did your parents come up with it? Or what is your nickname? How did you get that?

The theme/point of this third Sunday of Advent readings is 'our identity.' Our ID is what you allow (the spirit) to dwell with you. The readings will actually take this further and say: our ID is other people.

We tend to limit our ID to our first name or family name; often times we assume it is our status, wealth, academic qualifications, title or the 'things' or number of 'things' I possess/own or I am the 'image I portray' (especially on social media), but is this true? Is this enough? For the believer/Christian there is more to our ID. Our ID is best defined by those for whom we live to serve, the spirit with which we 'live for others' — this is our joy and our ID (or is it?).

Isaiah, in the first reading, is filled with rejoicing; why? Because of the spirit of the Lord that is upon (dwells in) him. It is a spirit that 'sends' (moves) him out of himself to others: to bring glad tidings to the poor, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, to release prisoners, to bring a year of favor. What defines this ancient bearer of glad tidings is 'his in-dwelling spirit' and what he brings to others. A prophet 'exists' for others and the Other (God).

How often in our lives do we, too, actually know what kind of spirit we must bring to others, others' situations or dilemmas and questions, or the world's/society's brokenness, the need for 'Good News,' or healing/release? We see it, but do we choose to keep the door closed? Do we intentionally hesitate to be bearers of Glad Tidings?

The establishment/status quo of John the Baptist's time is totally confused about who he is. They cannot figure him out. He is nothing like the aristocratic priestly/prophetic class of the time, which everybody could recognize by their known lifestyle. A high powered delegation is sent to investigate and ask him: *who are you?* (Pontius Pilate asks this same question of Jesus when he is brought before him.) Are you a prophet? Are you the messiah? Are you Elijah? To all these he answers: No! They insist, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those who sent us? This strange voice lives reclusively in the desert, he feeds on locusts and honey, clad in camel skin, yet many flock to hear his word of truth and they are 'converted.' John then says who he is: a witness—one who gives testimony to the light. John is but only a 'herald' of one who is among you but you do not recognize yet. The identity of John is what he does for others.

On this Gaudete Sunday, we Christians are challenged to rediscover our identity. Are you a Christian? Are you Catholic? What really makes you Catholic? We are not catholic merely by name; no! We are not Christian just because we wear a cross or get our children to receive the sacraments (which is very good). We are not Christians because of just what we say we profess. To be Christian is to 'live in a Christian way.' It means allowing the Spirit of Christ to 'show' in our manner of life. It means removing what 'separates people' by our actions and lifestyle. It means the spirit by which we live our lives brings joy or exudes joy for others.

'By our lives' they will know we are Christians.

— Father Anthony



Rite of Welcome (R.C.I.A.)

Next Sunday, Dec 20th at the 10:30 AM Mass we will WELCOME with great joy, candidates into the 'Order of Catechumens' (the First Step in the RCIA process). These candidates express and the Church accepts their intention to respond to God's call to follow Christ.

Welcome Home!

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec. 18	8:00 AM	Guilio Balducci , by Mary O'Malley
Dec. 19	4:00 PM	Angelina Arruda (21 st Anniv.), by her great-grandchildren

PRAY THE ROSARY every Saturday at 3:30 PM in the church, led by members of the Saint Boniface Knights of Columbus.

WEEKDAY MASSES DURING ADVENT

Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 8:00 AM and 6:30 PM

CHRISTMAS MASSES

Thursday, December 24: 3:00 PM, 5:00 PM & 8:00 PM

Friday, December 25: 9:00 AM

NEW YEAR'S EVE ADORATION

Thursday, December 31: 7:00 AM – 6:00 PM

NEW YEAR'S EVE MASS Thursday, December 31: 6:30 PM
(No Mass on New Year's Day)

SIGN UP FOR CHRISTMAS MASSES

We are planning for Christmas and we need your utmost attention to this, as we are required to limit attendance to 50 people in the upper church at each Mass. We ask that you sign up in advance to let us know your preferred Mass time and the number from your family who will attend. You will find a signup form both at the exit doors and in your bulletin. You may also email the parish office to reserve a time. When you arrive for the Christmas Mass there will be assigned seating; any number above 50 will be seated downstairs in the parish hall where the Mass will be simulcast. *Thank you for your understanding and cooperation as we try to keep everyone safe.*

Don't fall for the Gift Card Scam!

Sadly the holidays are an opportunity for scams. At least two pastors have experienced a scam email claiming they needed gift cards. This is a reminder that the parish would only use normal and ordinary means to communicate any requests, particularly involving donations. If an email request looks odd, hit DELETE!

HELP US FILL THE BASKETS FOR ST. ANDREW'S AFRICAN MINISTRY

The Women's Guild is collecting food, water and some paper goods to make up 20 baskets to help St. Andrew's African Ministry in Worcester. You may recall their Music Ministry of Adults and Children who have traveled here the last several years to sing and dance for us at the Song Festival. Saturday, December 19 is the cutoff for donations. There are bins in the parish hall to be used for drop off. In order to know what items (and how many) are needed, we have set up a web page where you can sign up for items you would like to donate. Thank you for helping to make Christmas a little easier for those who have really struggled during the Pandemic. Find the link on our parish website www.stboniface-lunenburg.org or go directly to the signup page at <https://volunteersignup.org/7POJM>.



COLLECTION REPORT

ACH / Online November	
– Sunday Offering	\$4,077
– Fuel/Maintenance	335
Total	\$4,412
Week of December 6	
– Sunday Offering	\$3,274
– Fuel/Maintenance	549
– Christmas Flowers	70
– Religious Retirement	60
– Other	90
Total	\$4,043

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

Many parishioners have been making their weekly offerings online. It's secure, convenient and easy to make one-time or recurring donations at www.stboniface-lunenburg.org

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

These four weeks prepare us spiritually for the Birth of Our Savior Jesus Christ at Christmas.



Look for our table of Advent books for spiritual nourishment reading.

Our Guest Celebrants at the 4:00 PM Mass for the 3rd and 4th Sundays of Advent are:

- Dec. 12 — Father Enoch Kyeremateng, Director of the African Catholic Ministry
- Dec. 19 — Msgr. John Doran, Former Pastor of Saint Leo's Parish, Leominster

These are great priests and great preachers — we encourage you to come and be nourished. You can follow us online too — check the website for links.

Bishop Barron Video Series:

"The Pivotal Players"

Every Sunday Afternoon (in Advent)
3:30-4:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall

Bishop Barron draws his audience into the life and work of twelve Pivotal Players—from great saints to literary masters—who personally demonstrated the dynamics of the Christian faith in their distinct time and place.

Rejoice in the Lord, Always!

It is a time for rejoicing: “The Lord is near! The earth rejoices in hope of the Savior’s coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time.”

We again encounter John the Baptist echoing Isaiah’s oracle: **“Make straight the way of the Lord!” This time it appears alongside Paul’s ringing exhortation: “Rejoice always, never cease praying, render constant thanks.”**

It also appears — quite significantly — alongside two passages that speak of salvation for the lowly.

The First Reading has Isaiah tell of being sent **“to bring glad tidings to the lowly, to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners.”** The Responsorial Psalm is Mary’s song from the first chapter of Luke: **“The hungry he has given every good thing, while the rich he has sent empty away.”**

The Alleluia follows this with a rewording of Isaiah: **“The Spirit of the Lord ... sent me to bring Good News to the poor.”**

The message of today’s liturgy is clear. The salvation we await with joy will liberate both the individual and the community, and its special focus will be the poor and lowly, not the rich and powerful.

“As the earth brings forth its plants ... so will the Lord God make justice.”

Jesus comes so that our community might no longer bear the scars of poverty and oppression but might instead **“be preserved whole and entire, spirit, soul, and body.”**

As a leaven in the world, the Church is called to participate in human affairs and to recognize in the poor, the afflicted, and the oppressed the presence of the Lord summoning the Christian community to action. .

U.S. Bishops, [Resolution on the Pastoral Concern of the Church for People on the Move](#), 1976: 5

— Gerald Darring

Saints of the Week

December 14.

SAINT JOHN of the CROSS

Saint John of the Cross was a 16th century reformer of the Carmelite way of life. Together with Saint Teresa of Avila, he lived the primitive Rule of their Order, and paid a dear price for his commitment to reform and authentic living. Saint John of the Cross died in 1591.



December 15.

BLESSED MARY FRANCES SCHERVIER

Blessed Mary Frances Schervier founded the Sisters of the Poor of Saint Francis, devoted to caring for the poor of this world. To this day they run hospitals and homes for the aged in the United States and around the world. Blessed Mary Frances died in 1876.



December 16.

BLESSED HONORATUS KOZMINSKI

Blessed Honoratus was born in 1829 and died in 1916. A Capuchin Franciscan, he founded many religious congregations for laypeople, and wrote many volumes of sermons and ascetical theology. A true son of the Church, he showed many signs of humility, including accepting his removal from all leadership roles in the communities he had founded.



December 17.

SAINT HILDEGARD of BINGEN

Saint Hildegard of Bingen was a remarkable woman who fulfilled many roles in her lifetime. A Benedictine nun, she became a rather well-known mystic whom Pope Eugene III encouraged to write. She ruffled feathers when she moved her monastery to Bingen, and confronted civil as well as ecclesiastical officials. Hildegard was declared a Doctor of the Church by Pope Benedict XVI.



December 18.

BLESSED ANTHONY GRASSI

Blessed Anthony Grassi had a deep devotion to Our Lady of Loreto from his childhood. He joined the Oratorian Fathers at 17, and was known as a very good student. Struck by lightning at age 29, Anthony was paralyzed for a few days before recovering, and becoming somewhat a changed man.



A Different Kind of Priest

Why should the religious authorities in Jerusalem show concern for a marginal figure attracting crowds to the wilderness and baptizing repentant sinners in the Jordan? In cultures guided by honor, persons are expected to **behave according to their inherited status**. The Baptizer's status or acquired honor derived from the fact that his father, Zechariah, was a devout rural priest.

Priest or Prophet?

But the Baptizer is not behaving like a priest. Instead, he looks very much like a member of the numerous groups of alienated priests that emerged as early as the sixth century BCE. These groups found themselves increasingly separated from the aristocratic priests in Jerusalem.

The historian Josephus indicates that the gulf between the latter and the large number of lower clergy was very great just before the outbreak of the Judaic rebellion against Rome in the mid-sixties CE. A major cause of alienation was the widely known and very evident luxury in which the Jerusalem priestly aristocracy lived in contrast to the conditions of the rural clergy.

By his dress and diet, the Baptizer distances himself from this luxury and his rural priestly heritage and presents himself more like a prophet, a spokesperson who declares the will of God for the here and now.

The Jerusalem priests wonder whether John is an "action prophet" (a spokesperson who also leads a popular movement hoping that God will intervene in liberating action) or an "oracular prophet" (one who only pronounces words of redemption or judgment).

After interrogating John, the delegation from the Jerusalem authorities conclude that he is only an oracular prophet. He explicitly says he is not the light but only the witness to the light. He denies that he is the Messiah, or Elijah, or "the prophet" who was to return at the end of time.

He is but the voice crying in the wilderness exhorting his listeners to prepare the way of the Lord. Because Jesus has not yet been baptized nor initiated his ministry, the delegation isn't interested in the "coming one" John announces.

Reform and Baptism

The second concern of the delegation is John's baptism. "If you are not one of these expected figures, then why do you baptize?"

Baptism was rather common in antiquity even outside of Judaism. The mystery cults of Isis, Mithras, and Eleusis



One who is to come after him will bring a more radical purification to those willing to repent.

contained baptismal rites. In the Old Testament, Naaman was cleansed of his skin problem by bathing in the Jordan (2 Kgs 5:14).

The high priest was required to engage in a purification rite before and after the rites of atonement (Lv 16:4, 24), and Leviticus 15 prescribes it for menstruating women. The Qumran community, too, practiced a form of baptism. In each case, the meaning of the baptismal rite derives from the ritual context, or instruction, or tradition.

The Jerusalem delegation understands John's baptismal rite to be a symbolic action. They want to know what it means. Mark and Luke identify it as a "baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins," a rite symbolizing purification and cleansing, a return to God.

The evangelist John implies yet another dimension. The Baptist baptizes with water, but one who is to come after him will bring a more radical purification to those willing to repent (see Lk 3:16-17).

Ultimately, "one who is stronger" will succeed.

— John J. Pilch

The Discipline of Joy

The Gospel reading feels like pulling the string of a bow without letting the arrow fly. John is not the light; but he has come to testify concerning the light about to dawn. He is not the expected Messiah. Nor is he really Elijah come again, though he dresses and acts like that hoped-for herald of the messianic times. Nor is he the Prophet-like-Moses mentioned in Deuteronomy (Jesus will fill and then transcend that role). As for his baptism, it is just a water baptism; there is one coming after him that he is not even **worthy to serve as a slave, and that one ... but the other shoe does not drop** in this reading.

The tension of the taut bowstring is not released. The reading is wonderfully selected here to focus our attention on the coming that is yet to be celebrated in a week and a half. It is just enough to evoke the joy of anticipation enkindled by the first two readings.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The First Reading is a gathering of four verses from a passage in the scroll of Isaiah that had to have been a favorite of Jesus. It is, Luke will tell us, the passage Jesus opened to when he stood up in his hometown synagogue to deliver his **one-line inaugural address there: “Today this scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing”** (Luke 4:21). As in the past two Sundays of Advent, we are hearing a prophet speaking to a depressed people returned from Exile and looking for a full restoration.

In the full sweep of the oracle (First Reading: 61:1-62:9), full restoration is promised—release of captives, joy replacing mourning, cities rebuilt, the wealth of nations pouring in, ample harvest and vintage—all the right relations packed into the meaning of biblical justice. And that condition of full *shalom* (peace, in the sense of fullness of life) is not a human accomplishment. It is a deed of God: **“So will the Lord God make justice and praise spring up before all the nations.”**

“Gaudete Sunday” is the name we used to give this Third Sunday of Advent. The name derives from the Latin version of the first sentence of the reading from St. Paul, where he begins to wind up his first letter to the Christians at Thessalonica, a passage that instructs us on the essence of Christian joy. It is worthwhile to unpack his words slowly.

Rejoice always. That’s not some vapid exhortation like “Cheer up!” Joy is really something accessible to the

Christian who takes the measures Paul is just about to **name, beginning with “pray without ceasing.”** While the Russian tradition of the steadily repeated Jesus Prayer is a literal expression of that mandate, most of us hear that

imperative as a call to be ready to turn familiarly to God in any situation—**“to find God in all things.”** In all circumstances give thanks. The Greek verb here (*eucharisteite*) is used in the Bible only to refer to giving thanks to

God—which makes this imperative just another way of urging us to pray always, discerning the giver behind all life’s gifts, even finding something to be grateful for in difficult circumstances, for, as Paul continues, this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus.

Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecy. In the context of this particular letter, which alludes in an earlier passage to what Paul will later call the fruits and gifts of the Holy Spirit in their lives, these imperatives urge them to be open to the working of the Spirit in their community—but not naively, for they are also told: Test everything; retain what is good. Refrain from every kind of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfectly holy and may you entirely, spirit, soul, and body, be preserved blameless for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. (Second Reading).

That’s the Christian way to talk about fulfillment. The human person in all dimensions—**where “spirit” identifies the person as creature, “soul” to the person as living being, and “body” as related to the earth and society**—becomes whole in those dimensions through the loving work of God. And the final line of the reading carries the fullest possible assurance: **The one who calls you is faithful, and he will do it.** Joining the Baptist and Isaiah, Paul calls us, along with his beloved Thessalonians, away from our culture’s empty promises of joy to turn to the real source of **fulfillment, “the living and true God” (1 Thess 1:9).**

Messages on our television screens imply that joy comes with the numbing of pain and the getting of goods. Our ordinary human experience tells us, rather, that joy comes when we are connected in good ways with others and when we have something to look forward to. Revelation goes a step further and tells us that fullness of joy resides in coming to know the face of God in Jesus, rejoicing in the discovery that we are not simply emergent life forms but beloved creatures of the Maker of the cosmos, and that we have nothing less than fullness of life with God to look forward to. If we are faithful to the One who is always faithful to us.

*The one who calls you is faithful,
and he will also accomplish it.*

1 Thess 5:24

Saint Boniface Church

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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, 6:00 PM

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.* 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 Peter Bak (978-403-5119) or Deputy Grand Knight Claude Poirier (978-660-3202), or email kofc16480@gmail.com.

PARISH STAFF:

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Newcomers to St. Boniface are invited and encouraged to formally register as members of the parish so that we may stay in touch with you with faith formation news, notices of special events, volunteer opportunities, and more.

Registration forms are available at the doors of the church, the parish office, 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.

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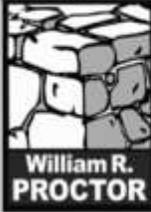
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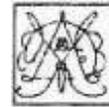
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