

Immaculate Heart of Mary
Advent Evensong III
Dec. 14, 2021 – 5 pm

Anthem (Paul) - Come, God-With-Us (stanza 3 of Savior of the Nations)

Prayer (Marianne)

Let us pray.

Lord Jesus,
Master of both the light and the darkness, send Your Holy Spirit upon our preparations
for Christmas.

We who have so much to do and seek quiet spaces to hear Your voice each day,

We who are anxious over many things look forward to Your coming among us.

We who are blessed in so many ways long for the complete joy of Your kingdom.

We whose hearts are heavy seek the joy of Your presence.

We are Your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!"

Amen.

—Henri J.M. Nouwen

Antiphon (Paul) – Advent Wreath Lighting – 3rd week in Advent - Marianne to light wreath as Paul sings

Anthem (Paul) – This Is the Truth Sent From Above (Advent book p. 194)

Poem (Marianne)

Advent, by Christina Rossetti

This Advent moon shines cold and clear,
These Advent nights are long;
Our lamps have burned year after year,
And still their flame is strong.
"Watchman, what of the night?" we cry,
Heart-sick with hope deferred:
"No speaking signs are in the sky,"
Is still the watchman's word.

The Porter watches at the gate,
The servants watch within;
The watch is long betimes and late,
The prize is slow to win.
"Watchman, what of the night?" but still
His answer sounds the same:
"No daybreak tops the utmost hill,
Nor pale our lamps of flame."

One to another hear them speak,
The patient virgins wise:
"Surely He is not far to seek,"--
"All night we watch and rise."
"The days are evil looking back,
The coming days are dim;
Yet count we not His promise slack,
But watch and wait for Him."

One with another, soul with soul,
They kindle fire from fire:
"Friends watch us who have touched the goal."
"They urge us, come up higher."
"With them shall rest our waysore feet,
With them is built our home,
With Christ." "They sweet, but He most sweet,
Sweeter than honeycomb."

There no more parting, no more pain,
The distant ones brought near,
The lost so long are found again,
Long lost but longer dear:
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard,
Nor heart conceived that rest,
With them our good things long deferred,
With Jesus Christ our Best.

We weep because the night is long,
We laugh, for day shall rise,
We sing a slow contented song
And knock at Paradise.
Weeping we hold Him fast Who wept
For us,--we hold Him fast;
And will not let Him go except
He bless us first or last.

Weeping we hold Him fast to-night;
We will not let Him go
Till daybreak smite our wearied sight,
And summer smite the snow:
Then figs shall bud, and dove with dove
Shall coo the livelong day;
Then He shall say, "Arise, My love,
My fair one, come away."

Carol (Paul) – G254 Your Mercy Like Rain

Poem (Marianne)

A poem by an anonymous blogger

Like a whisper passing through a crowd of children,
All eyes suddenly straining up for the angel,
He is coming,
Really he is, and all shall be well, the kingdom is coming.
The forgotten truth flames up in winter dimness,
Lighting hope as the days darken,
He is coming.
This world of pain and cruelty will be remade,
All shall be well, no more tears,
He is coming.

To children bent over screens, livid in the blue light
Of a thousand earthbound stars, dizzy and deafened,
The moon speaks, rising over silent fields,
He is coming.

To the warriors of hatred and contempt
And to their broken victims
The earth speaks, as the harvest rots
Like those who planted it, unburied,
He is coming.

To the last trees, the trapped wild things,
To the no longer teeming waters,
The wind breathes over the chaos,
He is coming.

To the evil thoughts feasting like cancer
On human hearts, multiplying misery,
The One with the sharp sword speaks,
I am coming.

Like a whisper passing
From the gardener to the healer
To the prayer to the maker
To the broken child

Lighting a candle against the darkness,
He is coming.

Like a whisper passing
From angel to stupefied angel
In the marvelling silence of praise:
With empty hands, in weakness and poverty,
To a failed creation with failure
To a dying creation with death
He is coming.

Like a shout, like the new-created light,
Like life out of death,
He is coming.

Hymn (Paul) – W811 O Day of Peace

Piano (Rich)

Reflection (Marianne)

A reading from Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Third Sunday of Advent is traditionally known as Gaudete Sunday. "Gaudete," when translated from Latin, means "rejoice." We know that Advent is a season of waiting and this week we are called to be joyful as we await the coming of Jesus Christ.

God, through Zephaniah, offers us glimpses of a hopeful future and calls us to "Rejoice and exult with all our heart." Isaiah reminds us of the ways God has delivered us, is delivering us, and will deliver us. He invites us to shout aloud and sing for joy because we shall "draw water with rejoicing from the springs of salvation." And St. Paul strongly urges us to "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice."

We have been experiencing tough times these past few years. With the suffering, loss, uncertainty, and state of our beautiful and broken world, how can we hear these words and rejoice?

In our minds, joy tends to overlap with happiness. Happiness is often connected with what is happening to us and around us. Happiness usually lasts for just a season. When we are discouraged and afraid, rejoicing in the Lord can be a hard sell. But the truth is that joy is not usually inspired by happy circumstances. Poet and author David Whyte writes, "To feel a full and untrammelled joy is to have become fully generous; to allow ourselves to be joyful is to have walked through the doorway of fear." And joy, unlike happiness, lasts – no matter what the challenges.

The prophets looked forward to the day of the Lord's coming as a time of great joy. Even Zephaniah, who has been called the most despondent of the prophets, kept the last word for joy—joy over the Lord's presence, joy over renewal and restoration, and joy over coming home. While Isaiah also speaks of doom and gloom, he looks forward to the Lord's coming as a time for shouting joyfully, "Surely God is my salvation." Isaiah looks forward to the Lord's coming as a day when the people would drink their fill of salvation like someone drawing fresh water from a well – certainly a day of great rejoicing.

It is believed that the Apostle Paul was under house arrest when he wrote the words we heard from his letter to the Philippians. And still, Paul could say, “Rejoice!” One might wonder what he had to rejoice about in that situation. Well, Paul rejoiced because he looked forward to the Lord’s coming, but he also rejoiced because the Lord is always near. Paul seemed to have experienced the Lord’s constant presence in his imprisonment. And so, he could say, “Rejoice!” Paul carried the joy of Advent with him wherever he went – even in a Roman jail.

John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for Jesus. He was sent into difficult, complicated times – times like we are experiencing. And his message was simple: repent; turn your lives around; turn back to God. For John, repentance was not about beating ourselves up for things done or left undone; to repent meant total transformation – transformation that bears fruit.

We might think that focusing our attention on what we long for but do not yet have might be a cause for discouragement rather than joy. But perhaps it is that very act of watching and waiting and looking for the coming of God that inspires great joy. St. Luke describes John the Baptist’s exhortations as “good news.” And it is, especially if we believe that we are not worthy of God’s saving grace. Nothing in our lives is beyond redemption. Knowing and accepting this is reason enough for rejoicing.

This is not easy. That’s why it takes intentional preparation and repentance – which means amending our lives and turning toward God. That is what we must do to prepare in this holy season. Advent is beckoning us to do just that, and it encourages us with a promise, rather than a threat: the promise of the coming embrace of Christ and the gift of abundant life that he brings.

Piano (Rich) –

Prayer (Marianne)

Let us pray.

My hidden Lord Jesus, I love You and thank You with profound gratitude for uniting Yourself with fallen humanity. When You first entered into this world, You remained hidden for nine months in the immaculate womb of Your Blessed Mother. She carried You, body and blood, soul and divinity, within the sanctuary of her body. She also carried You within her heart as a result of her perfect love for You and her perfect obedience to the will of the Father.

Precious Lord, as I embrace this Advent season, please open my eyes to see the great value and blessing of Your Incarnation. Help me to discover Your hidden presence in this world and within my own soul. I desire to see, understand and experience the profound effects that Your Incarnation has on my life and I desire to receive those effects more fully this Advent. May I become a sanctuary in which You dwell so that I, like Your dear Mother, may bring Your presence into the world.

My loving Jesus, I choose You, this Advent, as my King and my God. I abandon myself to You and seek to put all my trust in Your tender care. Draw me close to You and free me from my sin so that I may love You with a pure and holy heart.

Mother Mary, as You carried your dear Son in your immaculate womb, you also carried Him in your heart. Pray for me, this Advent, that I may surrender myself to the will of the Father in imitation of you. You said “Yes” to all that God asked of you and never hesitated to fully embrace His divine will. Pray that I may imitate your perfect example so as to share a deeper union with you and your divine Son.

Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus,
Come, Lord Jesus!
Amen.

Hymn (Paul) – W860 Christ Is Surely Coming