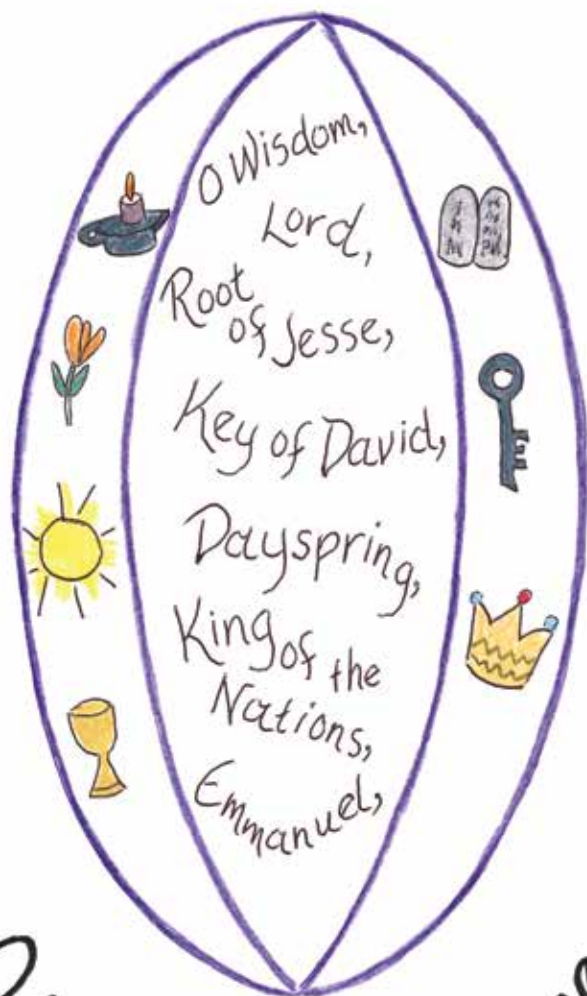


Advent Reflections 2017



O Antiphons of Advent

O Antiphans

The Antiphons are one of
the treasures of Advent.

From December 17 to December 23,
each day one of the O Antiphons
is reflected on in the Liturgy
of the closing days of Advent.

The O Antiphons speak of some of the
prophets and kings of the Old Testament.

They remind us of the spiritual longing
of the people awaiting a Savior.

They take us through the long years
up to the birth of the Savior, Emmanuel, Jesus.

*Explanation of the O Antiphons and
the cover design are by Sister Dolores Zieser*

Advent Voices
Prophets of yesterday
Witnesses of today
Prepare the way of the Lord!
Straighten your way!
Speak for the voiceless.
Listen for God.

Advent Voices beckon us:

Quiet
the world's cacophony
media blitzes
words of not-enough
Distill
The cry for faith
The song of hope
The call to love

Advent Voices, heralding

Then
Now
Open your hearts
Soften your souls
Strengthen your spirit
Embody the message
Our Savior Comes

*Advent Voices Poem written by
Anastasia Nicklaus Schmelzer, Presentation Associate*

**First Sunday of Advent
December 3, 2017**

“Jesus said to his disciples: Be watchful! Be alert! Keep a sharp lookout! For you do not know when I will come, at evening, at midnight, early dawn or late daybreak. Don't let me find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” Mark 13:33, 35-37

Today as we begin the season of Advent we are encouraged to be on the 'lookout' for Jesus. We look for practical ways to live into the holiness of the season in our everyday lives.

How can I be more alert and respond in the moments of each day to the many ways Jesus will come to me?

Sister Janice Hancock

Isaiah 63:16-17, 19, 64:2-7; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-16, 18-19
1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:33-37

Monday
December 4, 2017

“The centurion said in reply, ‘Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, only say the word and my servant will be healed.’” Matthew 8:8

I hear the scriptures speaking to me of peace. Isaiah 2:4 says, “One nation shall not raise the sword against another, nor shall they train for war again.” That would be wonderful.

Psalms 122:8 says, “For my family and friends I say, ‘May peace be yours.’”

If you have heard any news you hear much violence. There is much to be done before peace is with us.

Jesus tells the centurion who says, “Lord, I am not worthy to have you enter under my roof, only say the word and my servant will be healed.” The centurion has found peace in his faith in Jesus. Wouldn't it help our world if more people could have this great faith in Jesus?

Lord, peace must begin with me. Please help my faith to be strong and may I work for peace this day and wherever I am able.

Mary Irene Stanton, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalm 122:4, 8-9; Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday
December 5, 2017

“The wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid. The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them. The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest; the lion shall eat hay like the ox. The baby shall play by the cobra’s den, and the child lay his hand on the adder’s lair. There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea.” Isaiah 11:6-9

A peaceful world, Isaiah tells us, is “full of the knowledge of the Lord.” What is the knowledge of the Lord? Probably it can be summarized as recognizing that, if we work together with love and compassion, we will find peace in our hearts and in our communities. All our physical and spiritual needs will be met, which is what, deep down, nearly everyone really wants. However, it takes great faith and trust in God’s goodness to choose the path of peace.

Make a commitment today to pray for peace ... peace in our families, peace in our communities, peace in our world.

Sister Cheryl Demmer

Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24

**Wednesday
December 6, 2017**

**“Jesus said, ‘I do not want to send the crowd away hungry.’
The apostles responded, ‘Where could we ever get enough
bread in this deserted place to satisfy such a crowd?’
Jesus said, ‘Bring me what you have.’” Matthew 15:32-33**

How often, when working in our chosen ministry, do we ask, “Where will we ever get enough money/food/workers?” And how many times has the Lord come through and multiplied whatever you had to make it fill your needs?

Lord, teach me to worry less and to trust you more in everything I do.

Mary Lou Mauss, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 25:6-10; Psalm 23:1-6; Matthew 15:29-37

**Thursday
December 7, 2017**

“Open to me the gates of justice; I will enter them and give thanks to God.” Psalm 118:19

A quick review of the news reveals the painful reality of millions who hunger and thirst for justice, not only in the homeland of Jesus, but in so many other places around the world. In a recent interview, Dr. Cornel West stated that “justice is what love looks like in public.”

During this Christmas season, before we sing one more Christmas carol about peace on Earth, make one, firm commitment for 2018 to support persons and/or organizations that work for justice and peace.

Sister Corine Murray

Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1, 8-21, 25-27; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

**Feast of the Immaculate Conception
Friday, December 8, 2017**

**“Rejoice, oh highly favored one! The Lord is with you!
Luke 1:28**

How often do we say these words: “Hail Mary, full of grace! The Lord is with you!”

That is Mary’s gift to us also. Mary is the mother of us all. (Genesis 3:21) Yes, the Lord is with us. The Lord is in us. We carry the Lord at all times. Everything we think, do and say is fruit of that gift. Indeed, blessed is the fruit of your womb!

Mary, you are our Mother. Under your guidance we can be God’s presence everywhere, every day. You give us the courage to face our fears, to make right the wrongs in our path; the injustices and unfair practices.

Today we rejoice, oh highly favored one! Because the Lord is with us! We are filled with gratitude and love!

Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, Presentation Associate

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Psalm 98:1-4
Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

Saturday
December 9, 2017

“This is the way; walk in it.” Isaiah 30:21

I am terrible at locating a business or site I've never driven to before. Thus, I use map quest and even ask a few people for landmarks to assist in approaching my destination. Today's readings are a road map for us to walk in the Lord's footsteps as we approach eternal life.

In Matthew 9:35 Jesus models what I am to do while on this earthly journey: proclaim God loves us and cure others with kind deeds and kinder words. Jesus clearly states that we, his 21st century disciples, will do even greater deeds of love when we believe Jesus has empowered us to do his work.

Knowing that the second time I drive to a new site will be even easier as I sort of know where I am going, today's readings reaffirm that I can be that voice. Unlike driving to a new site, my life journey is much easier when I reflect often on Isaiah 30:21 and believe I am in the driver's seat with the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Lord, I ask for courage to be your voice and hands. Help me believe I can move mountains in your Name with kindness to the stranger, the lonely and the forgotten. Amen.

Sister Marilou Irons

Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-6
Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

Second Sunday of Advent December 10, 2017

“Mercy and truth have met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.” Psalm 85:10

Advent is a season of solemn expectation, as well as a penitential season: the themes of the readings illustrate the fruit of God’s grace through repentance and forgiveness. Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace; repentance and forgiveness. These are prominent and recurring themes of Scripture, and perhaps particularly relevant on these seemingly endless days of waiting. In Mark’s Gospel, John the Baptist received all who came to him confessing their sins and offered them a baptism of repentance for forgiveness. St. Peter, in his second letter, tells us that the Lord is patient with us, not wanting any to perish, but rather that all should come to repentance. As often as I repent and am forgiven, as a sinful human I never feel very righteous or clean or innocent. I tend to sense the shadow of my own failings around me, forgetting that we are forgiven and made clean by God’s grace through repentance and confession.

One of my favorite metaphors is Christ the Good Shepherd, who, according to the Prophet Isaiah, gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them in his bosom. Oh, to be innocent as a lamb! To be held close to Jesus as a mother holds her child. Yet as often as I feel as helpless as a sheep without a shepherd, I must remind myself that the Lord is not impatient; he waits for me to repent and will open his arms of forgiveness into a loving embrace. Then I will receive mercy; then I will be made righteous and clean by God’s grace; then I will be innocent as a lamb – at least for about five minutes!!

Do I know any people who are suffering, distressed or lost and feeling helpless like sheep without a shepherd? Do I hold them in my heart in prayer, as Jesus holds the lambs to his bosom? Do I give mercy and peace and forgiveness to those who have grieved me, or to those whom I have grieved? Gracious Lord, help me to love and forgive myself and others as you love and forgive me.

Robert H. Mace, Jr., Presentation Associate

Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11; Psalm 85:9-14
2 Peter 3:8-14; Mark 1:1-8

**Monday
December 11, 2017**

“Strengthen the hands that are feeble, make firm the knees that are weak, say to those whose hearts are frightened: ‘Be strong, fear not!’” Isaiah 35:3-4a

“When Jesus saw their faith, he said ‘As for you, your sins are forgiven.’” Luke 5:20

These passages were the first to catch my attention as I read today's readings. As I reflected more deeply, I found them to be connected. Strengthening, helping and serving those in need is our human and Christian call. The men lowering the paralyzed man through the roof of the house to reach Jesus perform a great act of service and friendship. Jesus recognizes the faith of the man in need of healing and his supportive friends. Jesus then heals and forgives the paralyzed man.

**How is God calling you to strengthen, serve those around you?
When have others strengthened your faith and lifted your spirit?**

Sister Annette Kestel

Isaiah 35:1-10; Psalm 85:9-14; Luke 5:17-26

**Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe
Tuesday, December 12, 2017**

“Then Uzziah said to her, ‘Blessed are you, daughter, by the Most High God, above all the women on Earth; and blessed be the Lord God, the creator of heaven and Earth, who guided your blow at the head of the chief of our enemies. Your deed of hope will never be forgotten by those who tell of the might of God.’” Judith 13:18-19

Judith was a beautiful strong woman of God. He gave her the knowledge and the power to overcome her enemies for the sake of her people. Even to the point of beheading Holofernes, the general of the Assyrian army. She prayed to God, “Strengthen me this day, O God of Israel!”

With God all things are possible. God listens to our prayers. Prayers are answered and all things are possible.

Today is the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of all the Americas. She promises to give us her love and compassion, her help and protection.

There are many strong women of faith in the bible and throughout world history. Take a moment today to read and reflect on Judith, Our Lady of Guadalupe, or Nano Nagle. Let us continue to be strong women and men of faith; helping others in need and standing up for the rights of all people.

**With God and Mary Most Holy, all things are possible.
Be Strong, Live Strong, Women of God!
“Strengthen me this day, O God of Israel!”**

Darla Budden, Presentation Associate

Zechariah 2:14-17; Judith 13:18-19; Luke 1:26-38

**Wednesday
December 13, 2017**

**“They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength.”
Isaiah 40:31**

In the deep jungles of Africa, a traveler was making a long trek. Coolies had been engaged from a tribe to carry the loads. The first day they marched rapidly and went far. The traveler had high hopes of a speedy journey. But the second morning these jungle tribesmen refused to move. For some strange reason they just sat and rested. On inquiry as to the reason for this strange behavior, the traveler was informed that they had gone too fast the first day, and that they were now waiting for their souls to catch up with their bodies. (Lettie Cowman, Springs in the Valley)

**Take a moment this Advent day to:
Let your soul catch up with your body.
Renew your strength as you hope in the Lord.
Find rest in the waiting moments of this holy season.**

O bless the Lord, my soul.

Sister Jennifer Rausch

Isaiah 40:25-31; Psalm 103:1-4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28-30

Thursday
December 14, 2017

**“For I am the Lord, your God, who grasps you by the right hand; I who say to you ‘Fear not, I will help you.’”
Isaiah 41:13**

The first reading from Isaiah and the first part of Psalm 145 paint a glorious picture of the power of God as revealed in creation, a revelation of the greatness and goodness of God. But I am intrigued by the one simple sentence, Isaiah 41:13. Its tactile image calls forth memories of a trusting child, whose hand is held by a parent, particularly a father. That gesture conveys strength, protection, care, help, belonging. We are always children of God, needing and receiving all these reassurances throughout life.

In gratitude, may we remind others of God’s power and help, of God’s hand held out to each of us.

Sister Mary Louann Doering

Isaiah 41:13-20; Psalm 145:1, 9-13; Matthew 11:11-15

**Friday
December 15, 2017**

“To what shall I compare this generation? It is like children...” Matthew 11:16

Jesus has made other comparisons to children. This one is not complimentary. In the gospel, Jesus points out that the people cannot make up their mind. They are fickle. They complain about something and when it is changed, they complain about that. It is too hot. It is too cold. Perhaps we need to remember Goldilocks who eventually said “It is just right.” Do we know what is “just right” or are we just against whatever is?

How am I fickle?

Sister Rita Menart

Isaiah 48:17-19; Psalm 1:1-4, 6; Matthew 11:16-19

Saturday
December 16, 2017

**“... a prophet appeared, his words a flaming furnace.”
Sirach 48:1**

The readings today are about prophets, particularly Elijah and John the Baptist. It is said that every king needs a prophet. Ahab had Elijah and Jesus had John the Baptist. In my little kingdom, who is my prophet? Who in my court is pushing me to repent, to take action? I may not be fond of this person who calls out my sinfulness and my selfishness, my avarice and my sloth. Yet these people are truly a blessing as they are preparing me for the coming of the Christ.

Reflect on a recent interaction that made you feel like a “flaming furnace.” What was this prophet’s message? Tell God about the gift you received from this messenger.

Bernie Graves, Presentation Associate

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Psalm 80:2-3, 15-19; Matthew 17:10-13

Third Sunday of Advent December 17, 2017

“I rejoice heartily in the Lord, in my God is the joy of my soul; for he has clothed me with a robe of salvation and wrapped me in a mantle of justice.” Isaiah 61:10

The readings for today offer vivid reminders that this third Sunday of Advent is a day of joy (Gaudete Sunday). As I began to write this reflection however, the news in our country is far from joyful: the tragic hate-filled happenings in Charlottesville, Virginia. By mid-Advent news of Charlottesville could very well be replaced with similar incidents of violence and hatred.

In contrast, I read an article by singer and guitarist Jon Foreman entitled, “Why I Refuse to Hate the Hater.” He says, “By hating the hater I become one of them. The road to healing is a difficult path. But it is paved with forgiveness and compassion, not hatred and violence.”

Instead of hating the hater we are invited to follow Isaiah’s directive: “Bring glad tidings to the lowly, heal the brokenhearted, announce a year of favor from the Lord.” Or as Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians, “Test everything; retain what is good, avoid any semblance of evil.” (bigotry, racism, white supremacy, etc.)

Can we be like John the Baptist, a voice crying out, “Make straight the way of the Lord?” Scripture offers challenging invitations. How can we replace the mantles of hatred and the robes of racism with cloaks of compassion and garments of love for our neighbor? By prayer, of course, but also by our words and actions. On this Gaudete Sunday let’s look for ways to be people of hope and joy.

Sister Anne McCormick

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11; Luke 1:46-50, 53-54
1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

Monday
December 18, 2017

“The angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream.”
Matthew 1:20

Both the Jeremiah reading and Matthew’s Gospel for today illustrate how virtue, righteousness and justice result in right relationship and restoration. In Jeremiah, “they shall live again on their own land.” In the Gospel the personification of virtue, righteousness, justice and right relationship take human form in Jesus as a result of Saint Joseph’s listening stance.

In his visit to Manila, Pope Francis shared that a statue, Sleeping Saint Joseph, graces his desk, commenting, “Even when he is asleep, he is taking care of the Church!” How so? We may query. It was in Joseph’s rest that the will of God was revealed to him and subsequently, *that* is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about.

Perhaps Joseph may be the new meme for justice, personified. His resting, open, receptive, trusting, fidelity to God’s call, graced his life and ours.

Rest. Sense God revealing the direction for and in your life.

Barb Ressler, Presentation Associate

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Psalm 72:1, 12-13, 18-19
Matthew 1:18-24

**Tuesday
December 19, 2017**

**“But the angel said to him, ‘Zechariah, do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you must name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord ... Even from his mother’s womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God.’”
Luke 1:13-16**

The Sacred Scripture of today is another annunciation of an extraordinary birth among unpretentious and unknown folks, not unlike the birth of Jesus, Isaac and Samuel. Zechariah conducts himself like we sometimes do, (questioning), or like Sara does, (laughing) when an astonishing occurrence transpires. What matters is that we hold our hearts open to God’s presence and action in our lives and in our world.

Dear God of miracles and surprises, keep me open and attentive to your presence in the daily activities of today.

Sister Maura McCarthy

Judges 13:2-7, 24-45; Psalm 71:3-6, 16-17; Luke 1:5-25

**Wednesday
December 20, 2017**

“... for nothing is impossible with God.” Luke 1:14

The message of Luke 1:26-38 is familiar, perhaps too familiar. Without reflection on what it means for me today I can quickly dismiss it as an already known message. But as hate and fear seem to surround us, it is important to call upon the Spirit and our spiritual companions to help us to see the God of possibilities in our midst.

What do you believe about the scripture quote of the day?

What are your fears?

What will you ask God that seems impossible?

Charlotte McCoy, Presentation Associate

Isaiah 7:10-14; Psalm 24:1-6; Luke 1:26-38

**Thursday
December 21, 2017**

“God, let your love rest on us as our hope has rested in you.” Psalm 33:22

What struck me in all three readings for today was the emphasis on JOY. Anticipation of something so good to come, so marvelous as in these three readings can touch us deeply in our mind and heart with the same joy, hope and love. For me, the last two lines of Psalm 33 (even though verse 22 was not included in our Responsorial Psalm) sum up all three readings. Let us rejoice with Mary and Elizabeth with song and trust in our heart.

God, let your love rest on us as our hope has rested in you.

Sister Jeanine Kuhn

Zephaniah 3:14-18; Psalm 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Luke 1:39-45

Friday
December 22, 2017

“I prayed for this child and the Lord granted my request. Now I, in turn, give him to the Lord; as long as he lives, he shall be dedicated to the Lord.” 1 Samuel 1:27-28

So Hannah prayed, God answered, and Hannah responded. Clearly she responded in an epic way. Would you or I have responded like that, in such a big way? Speaking only for myself, probably not. But then I don't think I've had any prayer answered in such an obvious way, such an undeniable way. (I wonder what I would do if I had a “Hannah” experience.)

Don't get me wrong ... I believe in answered prayer. And I'm not saying God hasn't answered any of my prayers. I'm just saying I have had to look a lot harder to see the answer than Hannah did. I believe God answers my prayers, but, if I'm really honest, it's more like “I believe, Lord, help my unbelief.” Mark 9:24

In these last few days of Advent, as we await the greatest answer to prayer ever given, the birth of our Savior, may we all focus more on our belief and less on our unbelief.

God, give me the faith of Hannah!

Maureen Utter, Presentation Associate

1 Samuel 1:24-28; 1 Samuel 2:1-4; Luke 1:46-56

**Saturday
December 23, 2017**

**“His name is John ... Everyone who heard about this
wondered what this child would grow up to be.”
Luke 1:57-66**

Zechariah had a special purpose in life. He fulfilled his role!
John the Baptist also possessed a holy purpose that lead and
prepared for the coming of Jesus. We, too, are given a special
vocation, a calling to make Christ known to the world.

How am I making Christ known during this season of Advent?

Sister Lynn Marie Fangman

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Psalm 25:4-5, 8-10, 14; Luke 1:57-66

Fourth Sunday of Advent
December 24, 2017

“Mary said, ‘Behold the handmaid of the Lord. Be it done to me according to your word.’ Then the angel left her!”
Luke 1:38

The angel left her? Are you serious? Do you mean the angel left Mary – with so many unanswered questions? What about ...? What if ...? When ...? Where ...? How will she know ...? You mean that’s all there is?

After the high drama of the Annunciation: an archangel bursting, uninvited, into Mary’s morning, the announcement with all its majesty and mystery, the talk about a son and greatness and rulers and Kingdoms – and the shadowing of the Holy Spirit ... !

But no details, no time for suggestions, no opportunity for further dialogue, just this one, overwhelming, earth-shattering, out-of-nowhere expectation ... ! What could God be thinking?

Mary said, “Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it done unto me as you say.”

Gabriel’s message was condensed, intense and direct. We are astounded at Mary’s faith, awed by her trust, stunned at her openness, shocked by her acquiescence. We come to the quiet of our inner being to ponder in our hearts the wonder of it all.

Help us, O God, to humbly enter the stillness of our sacred space, approaching the liminal borders of your holy presence. Amen.

Sister Joan Lickteig

2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Psalm 89:2-5, 27, 29
Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

**Monday
December 25, 2017**

“But Mary treasured all these words and pondered them in her heart.” Luke 2:19

Today we celebrate Christmas and reflect on the Incarnation. Like Mary who treasured the words and pondered them, we also ponder the meaning of this mystery.

Because of Incarnation we can say “God is with us!” In fact, God is in us and in everything else that God created. Everything bears the divine fingerprint. (Richard Rohr)

But let Faith lead us to the knowledge,
Light us daily in awareness
That, swaddled in the bands of each one’s weakness
You are flesh among us still. (Raphael Consedine 1968)

God comes to us disguised as our life. (Paula D’Arcy)

What does Incarnation mean for me? How will I radiate compassion and love in my face and my action this Christmas?

Sister Marilyn Breen

Isaiah 62:11-12; Psalm 97:1, 6, 11-12
Titus 3:4-7; Luke 2:15-20

Tuesday
December 26, 2017

“You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved.” Matthew 10:22

During this season of love, a statement like this from Jesus might seem very disheartening. Today we hear about Stephen, the first martyr of the young church, someone who fearlessly spoke of Jesus and showed others the great power of the Lord that he had been given as he “was working great wonders and signs among the people.” He not only did great things, but he was very convincing to many as he debated with others who “could not withstand the wisdom and spirit with which he spoke.” Because of their inability to stop Stephen from inspiring the people to follow the way of Jesus, they ganged up on him, threw him out of town and silenced him by beginning to stone him to death. Through all of this, Stephen seemed calm; looking “intently to heaven” and seeing a vision of the heavens opened for him. His last words, ironically are not of anger, but in prayer for those who were his murderers. His love, his goodwill shone brighter than the gloom of his impending death as he said: “Lord, do not hold this sin against them.” He may have been hated because of the name of Jesus, but we believe that because he endured to the end, he was saved. His reward was to be received into the arms of Jesus in his heavenly kingdom.

Are we willing to be strong in our beliefs, our convictions, our daily living even if others shun us, talk about us? Jesus, fill us with your spirit so that we might have the right words to say as Your Spirit speaks through us.

Karen Bonfig, Presentation Associate

Acts 6:8-10; 7:54-59; Psalm 118:26, 27; Matthew 10:17-22

**Wednesday
December 27, 2017**

“The disciple went in, saw and believed.” John 20:8

The birth of Jesus was a couple of days ago and today, we are at the empty tomb. The first reading speaks of declaring what was seen with eyes and heard with ears while the Gospel declares that those who peer into the tomb see only wrappings and emptiness.

How do I hold paradox or “both/and”?

Do I seek to verify?

How long am I willing to ‘hang loose’ before coming to a choice?

Sister Joetta Venneman

1John 1:1-4; Psalm 97:1-2, 5-6, 11-12; John 20:2-8

Thursday
December 28, 2017

“Beloved: This is the message that we have heard from Jesus Christ and proclaim to you: God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all.” 1 John 1:5

On the fourth day of our Christmas celebration, the Church reminds us that not everyone is joyful; that there are people who are not of goodwill who do not wish to receive the Good News of Jesus' birth. Today is the Feast of the Holy Innocents in which the Church recalls and honors those baby boys whose lives were taken in a murderous rage by Herod who was frightened by the coming of the Christ. John's letter speaks about light and darkness, about sin and forgiveness. Herod lived a lie; he was unconcerned with the truth and justice of things. By contrast, we witness Joseph, a just and upright man. He lived in the truth. We have in Joseph and Herod examples of individuals who made a choice. Jesus is the gift of light for a darkened world. There is quite a contrast between Herod and Joseph. Herod cares only about himself and his kingly power while Joseph cares only about doing God's will. In today's first reading, we read that God is light; in him there is no darkness. Thanks to our baptisms and our daily decisions to follow Christ, his light shines within us. But – how bright is our life?

“Our soul has been rescued like a bird from the fowler's snare. Broken was the snare, and we were freed. Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.” Psalm 124:7-8

Deb Jasper, Presentation Associate

1 John 1:5-2:2; Psalm 124:2-8; Matthew 2:13-18

Friday
December 29, 2017

“Sing to the Lord a new song; sing to the Lord, all the earth. Sing to the Lord, bless his name; proclaim his salvation day after day. Tell his glory among the nations; among all peoples, his marvelous deeds. For the gods of the nations are idols, but the Lord made the heavens. Splendor and power go before him; power and grandeur are in his holy place.” Psalm 96:1-3, 5-6

We have just passed the birth of our Savior, where we sang many carols and hymns praising and glorifying God. Are we to stop singing to the Lord now?

The Psalms are songs in themselves. Here we are asked to sing a new song inviting all of us to bless His name and announce His salvation and wondrous deeds. We are to continue the singing of praises, started at Christmas, throughout all times, to all people and all nations. What a beautiful song Psalm 96 really is!

St. Augustine said, “A person who sings, prays twice.” Sing joyfully to the Lord!

Pray with me by singing glory and praise to our God forever!

Yvonne Kisch, Presentation Associate

1 John 2:3-11; Psalm 96:1-3, 5-6; Luke 2:22-35

**Saturday
December 30, 2017**

**“Do not love the world or the things of the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”
1 John 2:15**

John is not telling us to reject the world; the world is God’s wonderful creation. Rather he reminds us to prioritize, to put God first in our lives. This is especially important during the busy days around Christmas. Has the gift of the Incarnation slipped in our focus as we celebrate with friends and family this year?

Dear Jesus, thank you for becoming human and showing me how to love myself, others and God. Help me to always put You first in my life. Amen.

Janet Leonard, Presentation Associate

1 John 2:12-17; Psalm 96:7-10; Luke 2:36-40

**Feast of the Holy Family
Sunday, December 31, 2017**

**“And let the peace of Christ control your hearts ...”
Colossians 3:15**

Today we celebrate the Holy Family and reflect on how we might follow their example of love and faithfulness. Life in my family, and maybe yours too, at least at first glance, often doesn't appear to be holy. Nor does life in the larger human family. There is tension, disagreement, misunderstanding, betrayal, hurt feelings – the list goes on. And yet, family life, though not perfect, is holy. Every time we seek and accept the grace to withhold a cutting remark, hold the tension in love, try to understand from the other's perspective, ask for and give forgiveness, we live as holy families. The process isn't always pretty, but it is holy.

Confident that you will be empowered with the heart of compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, patience, forgiveness and love needed to navigate the turbulent waters of life in your holy family – sit in silence and allow the peace of Christ to fill and form your heart.

Carol Witry, Presentation Associate

Sirach 3:2-6, 12-14; Psalm 128:1-5
Colossians 3:12-21; Luke 2:22-40

**Solemnity of Mary, the Mother of God
Monday, January 1, 2018**

“The Lord bless and keep you! The Lord let his face shine upon you, and be gracious to you! The Lord look upon you kindly and give you peace!” Numbers 6:24-26

As I think about the blessing above, I am reminded of the abundance of God’s love and blessings in my life. As I set my intentions for 2018, I am reminded to look for peace in my own life and think of how I can help create peace in the lives of those I interact with. Am I filling my time with deeds and moments that will bring God’s grace or am I caught up in the “busy” and simply moving my schedule forward? How will I remember my intention throughout the year to be present and ready for the Lord’s face to shine upon me?

As we begin and throughout 2018, Mary, Queen of Peace, please guide us by your example to live the word of God and be open to his calls and presence each day.

Bridget Lahart, Presentation Associate

Numbers 6:22-27; Psalm 67:2-5, 6-8
Galatians 4:4-7; Luke 2:16-21

Advent Contributors



Cover Art

Sister Dolores Zieser is the fifth in a family of 14 children. She spent 40 years ministering as an elementary teacher, art coordinator and high school art teacher and 16 years in pastoral ministry at a senior apartment facility. She lives at Mount Loretto and is still busy working.



Advent Poem

Anastasia Nicklaus Schmelzer currently ministers as the liturgy/music coordinator at St. Edward Parish in Waterloo, Iowa. She lives in a converted Catholic church in New Hartford, Iowa, and appreciates chances for Advent ponderings, both alone and with friends.



Sunday, December 3

Sister Janice Hancock is a member of the Lantern Lights associate group and is retired and lives at Mount Loretto. She enjoys using her creative gifts making cards for the gift shop and other creative art projects. She is also an avid sports fan and enthusiastically cheers on her favorite teams.



Monday, December 4

Mary Irene Stanton lives in Mason City, Iowa, and is a member of the Cities of Faith associate group. She is a retired teacher and secretary and likes to practice hospitality and making cards for various occasions.



Tuesday, December 5

Sister Cheryl Demmer is director of faith formation for Saints Mary and Mathias in Muscatine and Saint Mary in Wilton. She coordinates for both parishes: religious education instruction, RCIA/RCIC, children's Liturgy of the Word, sacramental preparation and ministry to the homebound. She works with families for funeral preparation and is the safe environment coordinator.



Wednesday, December 6

Mary Lou Mauss is a justice promoter, on the Lantern Center board and loves the garage sale. Mary Lou and her husband, John, are currently living in Cedar Falls, Iowa, with three grandchildren while their son, Mike, is deployed to Afghanistan.



Thursday, December 7

Sister Corine Murray lives at Mount Loretto and reads and writes poetry. She is working with the local chapter of MOMS DEMAND ACTION for Guns Sense in America.



Friday, December 8

Sister Virgie Luchsinger, SFCC, lives in Chicago, Illinois, and is a trained nurse and theologian. She is always interested in living life at the deepest level and finds great joy in her relationship as a Presentation associate.



Saturday, December 9

Sister Marilou Irons lives in Dubuque and ministers as the resident manager of Applewood I and II, an independent living residence for seniors.



Sunday, December 10

Rob Mace lives in a suburb of Tampa, Florida, and is retired after practicing probate law for many years. Rob volunteers as a Eucharistic minister and sacristan.



Monday, December 11

Sister Annette Kestel lives in Dubuque, Iowa and ministers at the formation coordinator for the Dubuque Presentation Sisters.



Tuesday, December 12

Darla Budden is a member of Nano's Nine associate group and is from Petersburg, Iowa. She volunteers many hours for her parish at Saints Peter and Paul, the first consecrated church in Iowa. She is the vice president of the board at La Luz Hispana in Hampton, Iowa.



Wednesday, December 13

Sister Jennifer Rausch ministers in a 350-member senior living community in Hopkins, Minnesota. She regularly raises funds for the local IGA food shelf.



Thursday, December 14

Sister Mary Louann Doering has enjoyed the gift of being in the Presentation congregation for 63 years. Through teaching and parish ministry many good people added blessings to her life. She lives at Mount Loretto.



Friday, December 15

Sister Rita Menart lives in Cedar Falls, Iowa, and works as a counselor for Catholic Charities. She coordinates retreats for the Spanish speakers in the Archdiocese of Dubuque.



Saturday, December 16

Bernie Graves lives in Kansas City, Missouri. She is a trained spiritual director and serves as an intern for the Souljourners Spiritual Director Formation Program in Atchison, Kansas.



Sunday, December 17

Sister Anne McCormick lives at Mount Loretto helping wherever and whenever she can.



Monday, December 18

Barb Ressler is a high school English teacher at Wahlert in Dubuque. She enjoys gardening, reading and writing, cooking and caring for her dogs.



Tuesday, December 19

Sister Maura McCarthy spent most of her religious life accompanying the people of Southern Bolivia. She is presently companioning the Hispanic people of Hampton, Iowa, at La Luz Hispana.



Wednesday, December 20

Charlotte McCoy lives in Peosta, Iowa, with her husband Jim. She keeps her life full by working for No Place Like Home and traveling. Char is a member of the Servant Seekers associate group.



Thursday, December 21

Sister Jeanine Kuhn is currently living at Mount Loretto after spending the past year at the formation house with the canonical novice, Sister Mary Therese Krueger, and Sisters Rosalyn Ulfers and Margaret Anne Kramer. She is a spiritual director, helps out where needed at Mount Loretto, and is part of the Northern Lights associate group.



Friday, December 22

Maureen Utter lives in Ventura, Iowa, on the shores of Clear Lake. She works part-time at her parish, Saint Patrick, and belongs to the Lantern Flames associate group.



Saturday, December 23

Sister Lynn Marie Fangman lives in Dubuque and is a member of Nano's Nine associate group. She is director of stewardship for the Archdiocese of Dubuque.



Sunday, December 24

Sister Joan Lickteig is former teacher and reading specialist. She is currently in ministry of prayer and community service at Mount Loretto.



Monday, December 25

Sister Marilyn Breen lives in Chicago and ministers as a spiritual companion.



Tuesday, December 26

Karen Bonfig lives in Ionia and is a member of the Living Lanterns associate group. She is the pastoral associate for the Good Shepherd Cluster and enjoys time with her husband, five grown children and seven growing grandchildren!



Wednesday, December 27

Sister Joetta Venneman ministers with the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth in the capacity of education/advocate with those who are most in need. She enjoys photography, hiking, camping and being outdoors.



Thursday, December 28

Deb Jasper lives in Farley, Iowa, and works at Catholic Charities as the executive assistant to the director. She is a member of Servant Seekers associate group and married. Deb has three grown sons and daughter-in-laws and six grandchildren.



Friday, December 29

Yvonne Kisch lives in Charles City, Iowa, and has been married for 45 years. She has four grown children and three grandchildren. Yvonne is a member of the Lantern Flames associate group, volunteers weekly at the local food pantry, and is a member of the PV Volunteers. She is also the vice-president of the Dubuque Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women.



Saturday, December 30

Janet Leonard lives in Manchester, Iowa, and is a retired teacher. She is a member of the Illuminaries associate group and the Women, Children and Indigenous Circle. Janet volunteers in her local parish.



Sunday, December 31

Carol Witry has ministered in parish faith formation and as co-director of the Presentation Associate Partnership. Now retired, she enjoys reading, walking and spending time with family.



Monday, January 1

Bridget Lahart is an associate with the Chicago group. She teaches kindergarten through second grade special education at Medinah Primary School. Bridget is a lover of books, chocolate and family.

Notes



SISTERS
OF THE PRESENTATION
of the Blessed Virgin Mary

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*Sent with blessings from the
Presentation Associates and Sisters, Dubuque, Iowa*