



Community of St. Bridget
an inclusive catholic experience

First Sunday of Advent – December 1, 2024

Liturgist: Rose Gordyan

Homilist: Fionnuala Frances



www.youtube.com ...

Suggestion: *Please provide a piece of bread and cup of wine/juice, and a copy of this liturgy so that you can fully participate.*

Into this day will break moments of awareness, tiny shards of light in the midst of darkness that illumine the whole reality of existence. May the words we hear and share be such moments and may we be thankfully blessed by their gifts.

ALL: Together we open our hearts to the Holy Wonder of Life.

Opening Song: **Calling Maria -Protectress**, Alexa Sunshine Rose Released 2020-01-17

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kLhnGWcsGLO> (no video)

Calling Maria,
come bring your grace to me.
Calling Maria,
come bring your grace to me.

Mantle of Protection, Healing Grace.
Mother of Perfection, Beautiful Face.
And you come with your Chi
Wa-oh, wa-oh, wa-oh,
And you come with your Child.

Lighting of the Advent Candle

1. May we, during this holy season, reflect on the many and different ways we can begin to make the Holy One's compassion and love available to our broken world.

2. May we learn together to reflect on the Divine call to generous response in the light of Christ's life, and *as we light this candle today*, may we look forward to the new birthing of Eternal Love in all creation, expressed anew in our love for all.
3. This is a personal call to become Christ's presence and action in our world. Together we can begin to image Christ whose compassion never fails.
4. We give you thanks, O Loving Mystery of Life, for this time of waiting when we search to find you present in our midst. May we be attentive, be reflective, and be responsive to your Advent Presence among us!

Welcome to the First Sunday in Advent. Our Advent readings today focus on Hope. We cannot live without hope, especially in our seasonal dark days and hard times. Mary becomes the one who gives us hope as she awaits the birth of her child. She brings to us the One who is the Christ. We begin the Advent season with a renewed hope knowing we are loved by Our God as we reach out to each other in hope and love. We begin our prayer together in the name of the Divine: Source of All Life, Eternal Word, and +Holy Spirit Sophia. Amen.

Transitioning Out of Darkness

O Fruitful Ground of our Being:

5. As you gather us into the darkness of winter, You call us inside to the great fires in our hearts, those fires we have never believed in. You ask us to warm the hands of hope in our secret soul places. You show us the heaven seeds that have been planted in our souls, and you remind us that heaven's answers rest in the dark ground of our beings.

ALL: *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

6. When the deep loneliness comes, you cradle us in your enriching dark arms. In the darkness you teach us to trust in what we cannot see, to hope for that which seems impossible, to have faith in the night of unknowing. You reveal to us the necessity of patience and the holiness of waiting in the dark as we enter into solitude.

ALL: *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

7. In the darkness you cover us with beauty: the poetry of the moon and stars, the loveliness of nocturnal creatures who make music in the forest's darkness, the mystery of silvery shadows. You soften the day's light to show us the light of night. You give us the gift of rest and sleep. You send us your night angel to close our tired eyes and breathe dreams and visions into our longing hearts.

ALL: *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

1. Once upon a time in the holy darkness of our mother's womb, we waited for birth. Now we are being born again. We are growing wings in our sorrow's darkness and finding new eyes that can see in the dark. On your black earth pillow we rest our heads and hearts. We trust your unseen blessings.

ALL: *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

2. All of creation finds life in the watery womb of your darkness. Deep in the rich black soil of the earth many happy seeds are cradled in your nurturing womb. Soon the shell of the seed will crack open and blessings will rise up out of the darkness.

ALL: *We praise you, O Holy Darkness!*

Opening Prayer

O Holy One, we enter a sacred time, a time of waiting, a time of mystery, when we together open ourselves to share the brightest Light of Love entering our world. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD*

*We sense the movement of the Spirit of Life
as we listen to the Scripture readings broken open and shared by all.*

Song of the Soul ~ Cris Williamson; CD Title: The Changer and the Changed; © 1975 Wolf Moon Records; video: sarabethemet

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z1IXFLtEFJc> (no video - end .23)

Open mine eyes that I may see
Glimpses of truth Thou hast for me.
Open mine eyes Illumine me
Spirit divine.

First Reading: Jeremiah: 33:12-13, 15-16
A reading from the Prophet Jeremiah:

Thus says God: "In this place and in all its towns, now ruined, sheltering neither people nor animals, once again there will be pastures for the shepherds to rest their flocks. In the towns of the hill country, of the Shephelal and of the Negev, in the land of Benjamin, in the places surrounding Jerusalem, and in the towns of Judah, flocks will once again pass under the hand of the shepherd who counts them.

“For the days are coming when I will raise up a righteous branch from the line of David and Bathsheba, who will bring justice and integrity. In those days, peoples will be safe and cities secure. One day, all will say, ‘God is our Justice.’”

The inspired word of Jeremiah, as recorded by his scribe. Amen.

Responsorial: Luke 3:4-6

Cantor: *Prepare the way of God.*

The voice of one cries out in the wilderness:

“Prepare the way of God!

Make straight paths for God!” **R**

“Every valley shall be filled,

and every mountain and hill shall be made low!” **R**

“The crooked, winding roads shall be made straight,
and the rough ways made smooth!” **R**

All flesh shall see the coming of God!” **R**

Cantor: Alleluias

Second Reading – Gospel: Luke 1:5-25

A reading from the Holy Gospel attributed to Luke:

In the days when Herod ruled Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, who belonged to the priestly order of Abijah. His wife was a descendant of Aaron and Elisheba, and her name was Elizabeth. Both Zechariah and Elizabeth lived just lives, following all the commandments and decrees of their God. But they had no children, because they could not conceive; and both were getting on in years.

Once, when Zechariah had been serving as priest before God, and his priestly division had been on duty, he was chosen by lot, according to the custom of the priesthood, to enter the sanctuary of God and offer incense. At the time of the incense-offering, the whole assembly of the people was praying outside.

Then there appeared to him an angel, a messenger from God, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw the figure, he was terrified. Fear overwhelmed him; but the messenger said, “Do not be afraid, Zechariah. Your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear a child, a son, and together you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness. Many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in God’s eyes. He must never

drink wine or strong drink. Even before his birth, he will be filled with the Holy Spirit and turn many Israelites to their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go forth turning the hearts of parents to their children and converting many to the wisdom of justice. He will do this to prepare people for the coming of God's presence in their midst."

Zechariah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? I am an old man, and my wife is also advancing in years." The messenger replied, "I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God. I have been sent to speak to you and to bring this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak, until the day these things occur."

Meanwhile, the people were waiting outside for Zechariah, and wondered at his delay in the sanctuary. When he did come out, he could not speak to them, and they realized that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. He kept motioning to them, but remained unable to speak. When his time of service was ended, he returned home.

After those days, Zechariah's wife, Elizabeth, was found to be with child. For five months she kept her pregnancy to herself, saying, "This can only be God's doing. God has shown us favor and taken away the disgrace we endured among our people."

The inspired words attributed to the evangelist Luke. Amen.

Cantor: Alleluias

Third Reading: Thessalonians 3:6-13

A reading from the First Letter of Paul to the Thessalonians:

Just now Timothy has returned to us from you, bringing us the good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us and long to see us as we long to see you. Therefore, beloved, in all our distress and persecution we were encouraged about you because of your faith. Since you are standing firm in the Christ, we now really live!

How can we thank God enough for you, for all the joy we feel before God because of you? Night and day, we pray earnestly to see you in person again, and enlarge the dimensions of your faith.

May our loving God, our Mother and Father, and Jesus, the Christ, direct our steps back to you. May God make you increase in love and abound in love for one another, and for all, just as we have increased in love and abound in love

for you. May God strengthen your hearts to persevere in holiness before God when Jesus the Christ comes with all the holy ones.
The inspired words attributed to the Apostle Paul. Amen.

Shared Homily: Fionnuala Frances

And so it begins. Advent. Waiting time. In trust, in faith and in joy and love, we wait for the birth of the baby, for the Incarnation. Even Jeremiah prods us to be optimistic in the face of tough times. And Paul reminds us that Jesus will come 'with all the Holy ones' – our Holy Ones about whom we have been praying and remembering throughout November. That is a cause for joy, isn't it, the prospect of being reunited with all those who have gone before us? And not just our loved one. Jeremiah locates us firmly in the heritage and tradition of the prophets. Trust that there will be the rebuilding we need, the justice, the integrity. But it's not abstract; we need to do our share of the rebuilding. There's an Irish blessing that begins, "May the road rise to meet you...." You know what that feels like, when you are on a walk and your way is clear and straight ahead and easy and the sun is shining and the wind is behind you pushing you up the hills and you are full of energy. There's something of that blessing in the idea of making the paths straight for Jesus' way.

And finally, let's think about what this time was like for Elizabeth. I was thinking about Zachariah's silence and Elizabeth discovering she is pregnant. His silence seems to me to possibly be a great blessing for the next 5 months. Think about it. How annoying for her to hear from him that she's going to have a baby! To maybe hear that he has gone out to the crowd outside the temple after his news from the angel and announced the news to all of them before she even knows! No, it seems to me to have been a blessing of the Holy Spirit that prevented him from speech at that time. There he is, unable to speak, so she found out she is pregnant for herself, in her own good time. Not only that, she kept it a secret for 5 months, perhaps until the quickening. The excitement of that little flutter inside would have been too much to keep secret. So she tells Zachariah who would have been suddenly enlightened, as he sees that the words of the angel are seen as true. All in God's good time. Wait in trust, in joy and in love.

'So may God make you increase in love and abound in love for one another, and strengthen your hearts to persevere in holiness before God when Jesus Christ comes with all the holy ones.'

How do these readings resonate with your life today?

Holding these thoughts in the sacred space among us and strengthened by the support of one another, we now proclaim our affirmation of faith:

Affirmation of Faith

3. We believe that where people are gathered in love, God is present, and good things happen, and life is full.
4. We believe that through Mary's willing resolve, the Spirit of God beat in the heart of Jesus of Nazareth, and God's Good News was heard by the broken and wounded.
5. We are glad that the Spirit of Peace is present with us, the church, as we gather to celebrate our common existence and the fidelity of God.
6. And most deeply, we believe that in our struggle to love, we incarnate God in the world.
7. And so aware of mystery and wonder, caught in friendship and laughter, we become speechless before the joy in our hearts as we celebrate the sacredness of life in this bread broken and fruit of the vine poured out to be shared by all. Amen.

Prayer of the Faithful

For a deeper coming of Christ in our world that we experience through the birthing of God anew in our lives, let us offer our prayers:

We awaken to your call

Creator Spirit, we know that you hear our prayers and the prayers of all your people. In your compassionate love, hold them all close to your heart. Strengthen our faith so we may believe that with your guidance we can transform our world. Knowing you are hearing us better than we are speaking, we offer these prayers in all the holy names of God. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

The Holy One is with us, abounding in Love!

1. We open our hearts in Christ, who lives and loves, heals and empowers through us, and give thanks to the Source of all Life.
2. Birther God, you brought forth all creation from your Life-Giving Womb. O Love of the Ages, who was born from Mary's womb, we praise you and leap for joy in your presence.

3. O Holy One of ancient Israel, you revealed yourself in a shining star, in humble shepherds, in a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes. You embrace us with infinite love in every situation and relationship. You dwell in the depths of our hearts.
4. We invite you this day to set us free, heal us, transform us and empower us as we gather around the table of your love. As we celebrate this sacred mystery in the embrace of the Holy One of Birthing, we proclaim your praise:

Holy, Holy: **Holy is This One** Richard Bruxvoort Colligan, *Our Roots Are in You*. 2013 Worldmaking.net.

<https://youtu.be/wc13T8GMuao?si=bUlcoXZ7ajP7khBB> (no video)

Holy, holy, holy is this one
Holy, holy, holy is this one

In the wilderness, on the mountain
were you always?

Here among us, come to love us
were you always?

5. Praise to you, all-giving Mystery, born of Mary. You are the body and blood of woman. We glorify you, nurturing God for the dawning of the sacred promise of God's Anointed, fulfilled in Jesus, the Christ.

ALL: May Sophia Spirit be recognized in the gifts of this Eucharistic table, as we celebrate the +transformative power within this bread and fruit of the vine given to nurture afresh in us, the discerning gifts of wisdom, light and truth.

6. We celebrate the birth of Jesus, our newborn Emmanuel who came to give us fullness of life. During this holy season we share the bread of freedom and lift the cup of blessing. We invite all, especially those on the fringe of church and society, to join us around this banquet of love.

As Jesus gave birth to the New Covenant, he took bread, gave thanks, broke the bread, and shares it with us now saying:

ALL: *Take this all of you and eat it. This is my very Self given to you.*
(All raise bread)

At the end of the meal Jesus took the cup, blessed you, Birther of Life, and shares it with us now saying:

ALL: *Take and drink this cup of the new and everlasting covenant. It is poured out for you and for all, so that you might be free. Whenever you remember me like this, I am among you.*

(All raise cup)

Let us proclaim the sacred presence of our nurturing God:

ALL: Christ, by your life, ministry and death, by your rising to new life within us, you have given birth to your new creation.

(All raise bread and cup)

ALL: For it is through learning to live as Jesus lived,
And why he lived,
And for whom he lived,
That we awaken to your Spirit within,
Moving us to worship you truly,
Life-giving God,
At this time, and all time, and in all ways.

Cantor: Amen! (x2)

Communion Rite

Praying as the bread is broken among us:

7. Loving God, you call us to live the Gospel of peace and justice:
We will live justly.

1. Loving God, you call us to be your presence in the world:
We will love tenderly.

2. Loving God, you call us to speak truth to power:
We will walk with integrity in your presence.

(Presider raises bread and cup)

This is the Bread of Life and Cup of Blessing, through which we are nourished and we nourish one another.

ALL: In the sharing of this holy meal, may it be for us a sacred reminder of all that has been offered in this unfolding story as we give thanks for everything that gives us life, shapes and animates our bodies, our minds and our spirits.

All are invited to receive at our Tables of Friendship!

Communion Song Meditation: **Womb of Life and Source of Being;**

Text: Ruth Duck, Music: Skinner Chávez-Melo, © 1985, 1991 Estate of Skinner Chávez-Melo;
Text © 1992 GIA Publications, Inc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hheJAYQpCOI> (no video)

Womb of life and source of being,
home of ev'ry restless heart,
in your arms the worlds awakened;
you have loved us from the start.
We, your children, gather round you,
at the table you prepare.
Sharing stories, tears, and laughter,
we are nurtured by your care.

Brooding Spirit, move among us;
be our partner, be our friend.
When our mem'ry fails, remind us
whose we are, what we intend.
Labor with us; aid the birthing
of the new world yet to be,
free of servant, lord, and master,
free for love and unity.

Word in flesh, our brother Jesus,
born to bring us second birth,
you have come to stand beside us,
knowing weakness, knowing earth.
Priest who shares our human
struggles,
Life of life and Death of death,
Risen Christ, come stand among us,
send the Spirit by your breath.

Mother, Brother, Holy Partner;
Father, Spirit, Only Son:
we would praise your name forever,
One-in-Three and Three-in-One.
We would share your life, your
passion,
share your word of world made new,
ever singing, ever praising,
one with all, and one with you.

Let us pray together in the Name of Jesus:

- 3.** O Birther! Father–Mother of the Cosmos!
Focus your light within us– make it useful.

- 4.** Create your reign of unity now–
through our fiery hearts and willing hands.
Help us love beyond our ideals
and sprout acts of compassion for all creatures.

- 5.** Animate the earth within us: we then
feel the Wisdom underneath supporting all.
Untangle the knots within
so that we can mend our hearts' simple ties to each other.

- 6.** Don't let surface things delude us,
But free us from what holds us back from our true purpose.
Out of you, the astonishing fire,
Returning light and sound to the cosmos. Amen.

Closing Prayer

O Holy Mystery, as we long for the fulfillment of your birthing power in our lives, we remember the prophets and martyrs, saints and mystics, relatives and friends who have gone before us. We remember them within our prayer, as they continue to inspire us today. Embrace us in our brokenness and help us prepare in love for Christ's birth in our lives. Empower your people with your living Spirit to birth a new world of peace, justice and love. Amen.

Announcements

Blessing

In this sacred time, may we feel a great yearning for God to be born in our hearts. May we be an opening to love. May we use our gifts to mend and heal a broken and weary world that longs for the Light.

Gathered together,
ALL: We wait for the light.

Praying together,
ALL: We hope for the light.

Standing together,
ALL: We trust in the light.

Seeking together,
ALL: We step out with the light.

Singing together,
ALL: We are blessed by the light.

We go into this week, held together by the love of our Generous Creator, clothed with the nature of Jesus our Companion and reinforced by the strength of +Holy Spirit Sophia. Amen.

We go in faith to ponder in our hearts the mystery and the wonder of this Holy Season!

Closing Song: **Loving Kindness**, Karen Drucker: *Songs of The Spirit I* © 1999 TayToones.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9CEe_Kh7Gxc (no video)

May I be filled with loving-kindness.
May I be well.
May I be peaceful and at ease.
And may I be happy.
May you be filled with loving-kindness.
May you be well.
May you be peaceful and at ease.
And may you be happy.

May we be filled with loving-kindness.
May we be well.
May we be peaceful and at ease.
And may we be happy.
I am filled with loving-kindness.
I am well.
I am peaceful and at ease.
And I am happy.

***Thank you for your courage to worship with us in the spirit of equality
and justice!***

***You are welcome to join us again and support this Community with your
presence and prayer!***

*Today's readings are taken from the Comprehensive Catholic Lectionary, published by the Women's Ordination Conference.