

OUR SUNDAY CELEBRATION

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT / B

13 DECEMBER 2020

REJOICING IN GOD, OUR SAVIOUR. Christmas is a feast of joy and light. We celebrate God who comes to dwell among us and save us. With the prophet Isaiah, we exult for joy in the Lord. With Mary, our spirits rejoice in God our saviour. We do not deny the pain and evil that exist in the world, but we rejoice in the knowledge that nothing can come between us and the love of God made visible in Christ Jesus.

INTRODUCTORY RITES

ENTRANCE ANTIPHON Phil 4: 4-5

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice.

Indeed, the Lord is near.

GREETING

P. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

P. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

R. And with your spirit.

PENITENTIAL ACT

P. Brethren (brothers and sisters), let us acknowledge our sins, and so prepare ourselves to celebrate the sacred mysteries.

P. Have mercy on us, O Lord.

R. For we have sinned against you.

P. Show us, O Lord, your mercy.

R. And grant us your salvation.

P. May almighty God have mercy on us, forgive us our sins, and bring us to everlasting life.

R. Amen.

V. Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

V. Christ, have mercy.

R. Christ, have mercy.

V. Lord, have mercy.

R. Lord, have mercy.

The Gloria is not said during Advent.

COLLECT

P. O God, who see how your people faithfully await the feast of the Lord's Nativity,

enable us, we pray,

to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them always

with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever

R. Amen.

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING Isa 61:1-2, 10-11

A reading from the prophet Isaiah

I exult for joy in the Lord.

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for the Lord has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring good news to the poor,

to bind up hearts that are broken;

to proclaim liberty to captives,

freedom to those in prison;

to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord.

'I exult for joy in the Lord,

my soul rejoices in my God,

for he has clothed me in the garments of salvation,

he has wrapped me in the cloak of integrity,

like a bridegroom wearing his wreath,

like a bride adorned in her jewels.

'For as the earth makes fresh things grow,

as a garden makes seeds spring up,

so will the Lord make both integrity and

praise

spring up in the sight of nations.'

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

RESPONSORIAL PSALM Lk 1:46-50, 53-54

R. My soul rejoices in my God.

1. My soul glorifies the Lord,

my spirit rejoices in God, my Saviour.

He looks on his servant in her nothingness;

henceforth all ages will call me blessed. **R.**

2. The Almighty works marvels for me.

I Holy his name!

His mercy is from age to age,

on those who fear him. **R.**

3. He fills the starving with good things,

sends the rich away empty.

He protects Israel, his servant,

remembering his mercy. **R.**

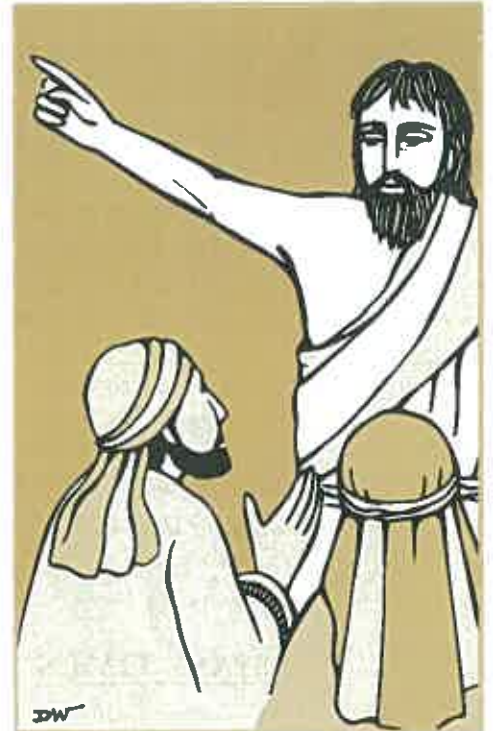
SECOND READING 1 Thess 5:16-24

A reading from the first letter of St Paul to the Thessalonians

May you all be kept blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Be happy at all times; pray constantly; and

for all things give thanks to God, because this is what God expects you to do in Christ Jesus.



Never try to suppress the Spirit or treat the gift of prophecy with contempt; think before you do anything – hold on to what is good and avoid every form of evil.

May the God of peace make you perfect and holy; and may you all be kept safe and blameless, spirit, soul and body, for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. God has called you and he will not fail you.

The word of the Lord.

R. Thanks be to God.

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION Isa 61: 1 (Lk 4: 18)

Alleluia, alleluia!

The spirit of the Lord is upon me; he sent me to bring Good News to the poor.

Alleluia!

GOSPEL

Jn 1:6-8,19-28

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit

P. A reading from the holy Gospel according to John

R. Glory to you, O Lord.

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light,

so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

ST MARTHA'S PARISH STRATHFIELD



Parish Administrator: Fr Jacek (Jack) Cichy

Administration Coordinator: Nicolle Mazzaferro (Mon-Thurs) admin@stmarthas.org.au

Administration Support: Larissa Argiro (Fridays) office@stmarthas.org.au

Sacramental Coordinator: Patricia Saad (Fridays) sc@stmarthas.org.au

Safeguarding Officer: Dianne Dawson safeguarding@stmarthas.org.au

Parish Ministries Coordinator: Helen Williamson

Music Ministry: Marcella Ayoub & Agnes Lee

Children's Liturgy Coordinator: Rachel Suriano

Plenary Council 2020 Ambassador: Helena O'Neill

Youth Ministry: Jessica Gereis youth@stmarthas.org.au



'There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me' ... John 1

70 Homebush Rd Strathfield NSW 2135

Phone: 9746 6131 Fax: 9746 3040

Email: office@stmarthas.org.au

Website: www.stmarthas.org.au

Parish Office: Mon- Fri 9.00am-3.00pm



St Martha's School: 9764 1184

Email: info@stmstrathfield.catholic.edu.au

Principal: Judy Gastin

Assistant Principal: Leanne Meehan

REC: Attilia Kazacos

THE PARISH OF ST MARTHA'S ACKNOWLEDGES THE WANGUL PEOPLE AS THE TRADITIONAL CUSTODIANS OF THE LAND ON WHICH THE CHURCH IS BUILT

Vision:

**Welcoming
Eucharistic
Transformed by the Word
Full of Grace
Proclaiming Good News**



*Please
continue
to support the
St Vincent De Paul Society
through the Church
Poor Boxes.*

Mission:

**Alive with the Spirit
Inspired by St Martha
We Celebrate & Witness
God's love
Using our Gifts & Talents**



MASS TIMES

Tuesday: 7.30am
Wednesday: 9.10am
Thursday: 9.10am
Friday: 9.10am

Saturday: 9.10am, 5pm Vigil Mass
Sunday: 8.00am; 10.00am & 6.00pm

1st Saturday of every month:

8-9am Adoration, 9am Benediction, 9.10am Healing Mass and Anointing of the Sick, followed by reconciliation

RECONCILIATION:

Saturday after 9.10am Mass or by appointment.

BAPTISM:

2nd & 4th Sundays of the month at 11.00am by appointment only.
(One months' notice is required).



Next Preparation Session:

7th February 2020 in the Parish Hall
Contact the Parish office for more information.

MARRIAGES: By appointment only.
(6 months' notice is required).



ROSARY: Tuesday & Saturday after morning Mass, Wednesday, Thursday & Friday 8.30am and 7.30pm on Fridays in conjunction with Marian Movement of Priests Cenacle and Divine Mercy Chaplet.

PRAYER GROUP / ADORATION AT

ST MARTHA'S CHURCH:
Mondays 10.30am - 11.30am
Resumes February 2021



**Please support our Catholic Press
Copies of the Catholic Weekly \$2
& Catholic Leader \$2.50
are available at the Church Entrances.**



GLUTEN FREE HOSTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR ANY CELIAC PARISHIONERS. IF YOU WISH TO RECEIVE HOLY COMMUNION PLEASE TELL THE CHURCH WARDEN OR SEE AN ACOLYTE IN THE SACRISTY PRIOR TO MASS.

SAFE GUARDING

A reminder to parents that the Notice-Board located at the side entrance contains various resources for children regarding Safeguarding.

A MESSAGE FROM THE ARCHDIOCESE OF SYDNEY.

Abuse is a crime. The appropriate people to deal with a crime are the police. If you - or anyone you know - have been abused, please contact the police. Alternatively, you can contact the Safeguarding and Ministerial Integrity Office at 9390 5810 or safeguardingenquiries@sydneycatholic.org. You may also want to speak to your Parish Priest who will be able to provide support and guidance.

The Archdiocese has a legal obligation to report crimes to the police.

Please be aware that if you "TAG" St Martha's in photos on your Facebook page, the images also appear on an "unofficial" St Martha's Facebook page. This "unofficial" page was created automatically by Facebook and is not controlled by St Martha's. We kindly remind you to take care when uploading photos of any children without parent consent.



Office of the
Children's Guardian

IMPORTANT NOTICE:

IF YOU PARTICIPATE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING MINISTRIES YOU ARE REQUIRED TO SIGN IN - ACOLYTES; READERS; EUCHARISTIC MINISTERS; CHOIR; CHILDREN'S LITURGY (LEADERS & CHILDREN) & SACRAMENTAL PROGRAM (LEADERS & CHILDREN). SIGN IN FOLDERS ARE KEPT IN THE SACRISTY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR CO-OPERATION.

ALTAR SERVERS ARE NOT PERMITTED IN THE SACRISTY WITHOUT A PARENT/TEACHER. THE SIGN IN FOLDER IS LOCATED IN THE CORRIDOR OUTSIDE THE SACRISTY.

'Sharing the Word'

**Mondays at 7 pm in St Martha's Church.
Everyone is Welcome.**





**2021 Columban Art
Calendars
(\$9 each) &
Christmas Card Packs
(\$7 each)
are now available
at the back of the
Church**



**2021
God's Word Daily
Reflection Diaries are now
available in the Church
Foyer.
Ideal Christmas Gift.
\$15.00 each (rrp \$19.95)**

Christmas Masses

24/12	9:10am Morning Mass 5:00pm Mass with Children
25/12	Midnight Mass (12:00am) 8:00am Mass 10:00am Mass No evening mass
26/12	9:10am Mass 5:00pm Vigil Mass
27/12	8:00am Mass 10:00am Mass 6:00pm Mass



will be used to issue Food Cards for needy members of our community so that they may purchase Christmas Hamper items directly from the shops. Thank you very much for your continuing support and generosity for those who are "doing it tough" at this time of year. Philip Rogers

Dear Parishioners, as you may have noticed, this year's SVDP Christmas Giving Tree has now been established at the front of the Church. Due to Covid19 implications, we are not collecting Food or Toys this year but rather seeking financial contributions. The tree has a selection of envelopes for \$5, \$10, \$20 etc with a designated collection stand beside the tree. The money collected



The weeks of Advent remind us to set aside some of the hectic business of the holiday season, and to quietly reflect on the promise of the baby born in Bethlehem 2000 years ago. The Bible readings relate to the Advent themes of waiting, preparation, light in the darkness, and the coming of the promised Messiah.

Prayer for Lighting the Advent Wreath Candles

Third Candle - The Candle of Love

Leader: Light and peace, in Jesus Christ our Lord.

All: Thanks be to God **Leader:** Today is the Third Sunday of Advent and we will light the Candle of Love.

Last Sunday we lit the Candle of Peace. We light it and the Candle of Hope again as we remember Jesus, born in Bethlehem, our hope and our peace.

(A person lights the Candles of Hope & Peace)

Today we light the third Candle of Advent, the Candle of Love. In their old age God gave to Zechariah and Elisabeth a son called John. John spoke to the people bravely in the desert denying his own comforts and prepared to die for what he believed. John taught that we should share what we have with others, treat each other kindly and show Gods love. He did this because he cared for people and wanted them to repent and find God's forgiveness.

(A person lights the Third Candle, the Candle of Love here)

Love is like a candle shining in a dark place. As we look at the light of this candle we celebrate the love we have in Christ.

Leader: Let us pray:

All: Lord God, Your witness John the Baptist grew up strong in spirit and prepared people for the coming of the Lord. He loved your people and baptized them in the River Jordan to wash away their sins. Help us to have the same love that we would be witnesses to him and spread the good news of your love. As Christmas draws closer day by day, help us to be ready to welcome him.
Amen.





The Third Week of Advent

Christ Even Now on the Way to Bethlehem. Evidently, in the mind of holy Church, neither the prophecy concerning Bethlehem Ephrata nor its

fulfillment in the day of Caesar Augustus is to be considered merely a glorious divine disposition and achievement. No, the prophecy of Micheus is still being verified every day, but predominantly during the annual Advent season; for the selfsame incarnate eternal Son of God who journeyed to Bethlehem to be born there physically, now to the end of time comes to human souls as to spiritual Bethlehems, there to be born anew, again and again. But be sure to picture these merciful spiritual journeyings of Christ to the Bethlehem of souls as all too often sadly realistic spiritual repetitions of His first long journey over the rugged road from Nazareth to Bethlehem. Meditate long on the wanton and malicious opposition He encounters on His way to them from souls that leave their senses and heart and mind to be ruled by earthly vanities, and their whole selves to be willing victims of the sensual and selfish illusions and witcheries of the seven capital vices. Can you still fail to see why Isaias and the Baptist compare the hardships of the way of the world's Messiah-King to souls with a rough, crooked, and almost impassable road up steep hills and down precipitous valleys and through dangerous mountain passes? Do you wonder that these prophets of His coming insist so strongly that merely sentimental longings and routine prayers, however multiplied, cannot prepare us worthily for the entrance He must expect and the welcome He craves? Pray very honestly, therefore, that you may begin to see the practical reasons for the Church's crying out in the desert world, and even into your own interior soul and heart:

"Prepare ye the way of the Lord: Make straight in the wilderness His paths; Every valley shall be exalted; Every mountain and hill shall be made low; And the crooked shall be made straight; And the rough ways plain" (Is. 40:3, 4). Then shall you see the salvation of God!

Excerpted from Our Way to the Father by Rev. Leo M. Krenz, S.J.

The Place of the Kyriale - The Ordinary of the Mass – in Catholic History, Liturgy and Music by Marie Therese Levey rsj. The prayers of the Ordinary, or the people's parts of the Mass, have formed a type of spiritual chain which has linked all the prayers of the Mass together since the first years of Christianity. The current book is a response by the author to a need expressed by fellow parish musicians to know more about the origin of the people's sung parts of the Mass. In this work the reader will meet well known saints who loved to praise God in song and contributed to the *Kyriale*: Ss Gregory I the Great, Bernard of Clairvaux, Hildegard of Bingen, Francis of Assisi, Dominic of Osma. You will also meet those who made life difficult for them. The work is full of stories of "saints and sinners very human figures (who) come alive in these pages".

Available for \$30 + P&P from *Congregational Administration Centre*, PO Box 1508, North Sydney NSW 2059. Enquiries (02) 8912 4853 email CAC.reception@sosi.org.au.

MASS INTENTIONS

Recently Deceased:

James Brady, Maria Kalinowski (Fr Jack's sister), Patricia Wilson, Norma Shore, Sr Pauline Smith rsm, Marie Verschuer, Enid Wynne, Frances Doumit, Jill Jones, Sr Frances Gaynor OP, Enid Wynne.

Repose of The Soul:

Fr Adrian Horgan, Fr Paul Ryan, Br Ray Dowding, Gerald Wilson, John Ferguson, Daniel Lucich, Ken Fraser, Connie Wong, Mary Bentley, Aldo Amarino, Salvatore (Phillip) Puglisi, William (Bill) & Dorothy Starr, Roger O'Reilly, Stefano, Estelle Thurn, Anne Cecilia Glass, Reginald & Agnes Glass, Gerald & Frances Gleeson, Faado & Alice Herro, John, Doreen & Des McNamara Patrick & Janet Reynolds, Jim Reynolds, Ken Rich, Monica & Patrick Ryan, Stephen Maxwell Stewart & Christopher John Stewart, Dr Stephanie Winfield, Philip Winfield, Francesco & Maria Colagiuri, Caterina & Matteo Genova, Maria You, Joseph You, Maria Xie, Maria Huang, Dominic Wang, Maria Wang.

Anniversaries:

Declan & Redmond Dower, Thomas Kenny, Dorothea Francis Starr, William (Bill) Starr, Harry Thorpe, John Harrington, John St George, Jack Dawson, Eileen Crocker, Dominic Wang, Maria Huang, Frank & Marie Monaghan, Lawrie Soares, Hubert Saldanha, Blanche Saldanha, Maud Soares, Mary G Cahill.

Sick Intentions:

Angela Vasta, Pat Fraser, Tony Grace, Baby Alice Ladd, Margaret Davidson, Marc Kayrouz & Peter Starr.

Special Intentions:

Siva Sothy, The Pagano & Colagiuri Families, May & Frank Grieves, Eileen Givney, Anne Goodrick. For Deceased Friends & Benefactors of the Dominican Order.



Remembering someone with a Mass Intention honours them in a unique way – surrounding them with the warmth of God's love. A Mass may be offered for the living or deceased, for a Birthday, Anniversary, for somebody who is ill, or for a special intention. Mass Intention envelopes are available at the Church Entrances. If you would like a Mass offered on a particular date, please contact the parish office to arrange this

Lectors, Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion & Altar Servers.

To assist with the preparation of rosters for Christmas would the parishioners who are on the regular rosters please indicate if they are available for the Midnight, 8am & 10am Masses. This is one of our major Liturgical celebrations so the more volunteers we have the easier it is to plan the roster. Please fill in your details on the 'sign up' sheets on the table at the rear entrance of the church. Any queries please contact **Helen Williamson 9742 5746**.



In the Spirit of St Martha, let us continue to help others and Carry Hope Everywhere.

19th & 20th December

	VIGIL	8AM	10AM	6PM
Special Ministers	Tandiono Family	Yvonne Martins	Jackie Romanous	Andrew Bova
	Tandiono Family	Geraldine O'Sullivan	Georgia E. Meaghan Williamson	Mary L'Estrange
Readers	Volunteer Needed	Daniel Martins	Helen Williamson	Anne Chow
	Volunteer Needed	Sandor Toth	Rachel Suriano	Miriam Redolfi
Altar Servers	VIGIL	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Patrick T.	Julian M.	Michael S.	Lawrence X.
	Matthew A.	Lucas M.	Anthony S.	Jayden Y.
	Christian S.	Jacob M.	Beatrice L.	Volunteer Needed
Wardens	Nathaniel S.	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed	Volunteer Needed
	VIGIL	8AM	10AM	6PM
	Edith Pun	Georgette Sahyoun	Trudie Rogers	Theresa Kuk

If you are unable to attend your rostered Mass kindly organise a replacement.

The current Roster is available to collect from the side entrance of the Church or via the parish website.

2019/2020 Tax Receipts can be collected from the Parish Office

Gaudete Week

Our week begins with "Gaudete Sunday." Gaudete means "rejoice" in Latin. It comes from the first word of the Entrance antiphon on Sunday. The spirit of joy that begins this week comes from the words of Paul, "The Lord is near." This joyful spirit is marked by the third candle of our Advent wreath, which is rose colored, and the rose colored vestments often used at the Eucharist.

The second part of Advent begins on December 17th each year. For the last eight days before Christmas, the plan of the readings changes. The first readings are still from the prophecies, but now the gospels are from the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke. We read the stories of faithful women and men who prepared the way for our salvation. We enter into the story of how Jesus' life began. These stories are filled with hints of what his life will mean for us. Faith and generosity overcome impossibility. Poverty and persecution reveal glory.

Preparing our Hearts and asking for Grace

We prepare this week by feeling the joy. We move through this week feeling a part of the waiting world that rejoices because our longing has prepared us to believe the reign of God is close at hand. And so we consciously ask:

Prepare our hearts
and remove the sadness
that hinders us from feeling
the joy and hope
which his presence
will bestow.

Each morning this week, in that brief moment we are becoming accustomed to, we want to light a third inner candle. Three candles, going from expectation, to longing, to joy. They represent our inner preparation, or inner perspective. In this world of "conflict and division," "greed and lust for power," we begin each day this week with a sense of liberating joy. Perhaps we can pause, breathe deeply and say,

"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord,
my spirit rejoices in God my savior."

Each day this week, we will continue to go through our everyday life, but we will experience the difference our faith can bring to it. We are confident that the grace we ask for will be given us. We will encounter sin - in our own hearts and in our experience of the sin of the world. We can pause in those moments, and feel the joy of the words,

"You are to name him Jesus,
because he will save his people
from their sins." Matthew 1:21

We may experience the Light shining into dark places of our lives and showing us patterns of sinfulness, and inviting us to experience God's mercy and healing. Perhaps we wish to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation this week. We may want to make gestures of reconciliation with a loved one, relative, friend or associate. With more light and joy, it is easier to say, "I'm sorry; let's begin again."

Each night this week we want to pause in gratitude. Whatever the day has brought, no matter how busy it has been, we can stop, before we fall asleep, to give thanks for a little more light, a little more freedom to walk by that light, in joy. Our celebration of the coming of our Savior in history, is opening us up to experience his coming to us this year, and preparing us to await his coming in Glory.

Come, Lord Jesus. Come and visit your people.
We await your coming. Come, O Lord.



This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not,' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

R. Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ

HOMILY

PROFESSION OF FAITH APOSTLES' CREED

Or the Nicene Creed may be said.

I believe in God, / the Father almighty, / Creator of heaven and earth, / and in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord, / who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, / born of the Virgin Mary, / suffered under Pontius Pilate, / was crucified, died and was buried; / he descended into hell; / on the third day he rose again from the dead; / he ascended into heaven, / and is seated at the right hand of God the Father almighty; / from there he will come to judge the living and the dead. / I believe in the Holy Spirit, / the holy catholic Church, / the communion of saints, / the forgiveness of sins, / the resurrection of the body, / and life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

LITURGY OF THE EUCHARIST

After the priest raises the paten with the bread and prays, and then the chalice, we respond to each prayer:

R. Blessed be God for ever.

P. Pray, brethren (brothers and sisters), that my sacrifice and yours may be acceptable to God, the almighty Father.

R. May the Lord accept the sacrifice at your hands for the praise and glory of his name, for our good and the good of all his holy Church.

PRAYER OVER THE OFFERINGS

P. May the sacrifice of our worship, Lord, we pray,

be offered to you unceasingly, to complete what was begun in sacred mystery and powerfully accomplish for us your saving work.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

P. Lift up your hearts.

R. We lift them up to the Lord.

P. Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.

R. It is right and just.

PREFACE I OF ADVENT

After the Preface, we sing or say:

All: Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of hosts. Heaven and earth are full of your glory. Hosanna in the highest. Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna in the highest.

THE MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION

P. The mystery of faith

All: Save us, Saviour of the world, for by your Cross and resurrection you have set us free.

COMMUNION RITE

P. At the Saviour's command and formed by divine teaching, we dare to say:

All: Our Father, who art in heaven ...

P. Deliver us, Lord, we pray ...

All: For the kingdom, the power and the glory are yours now and for ever.

P. Lord Jesus Christ, who said ...

R. Amen.

P. The peace of the Lord be with you always.

R. And with your spirit.

P. Let us offer each other the sign of peace.

All exchange a sign of peace

LAMB OF GOD

All: Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, have mercy on us.

Lamb of God, you take away the sins of the world, grant us peace.

INVITATION TO COMMUNION

P. Behold the Lamb of God, behold him who takes away the sins of the world. Blessed are those called to the supper of the Lamb.

R. Lord, I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed.

COMMUNION ANTIPHON *cf. Isa 35:4*

Say to the faint of heart: Be strong and do not fear.

Behold, our God will come, and he will save us.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

P. We implore your mercy, Lord, that this divine sustenance may cleanse us of our faults

and prepare us for the coming feasts.

Through Christ our Lord.

R. Amen.

THE CONCLUDING RITE

P. The Lord be with you.

R. And with your spirit.

P. May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

R. Amen.

P. Go forth, the Mass is ended.

R. Thanks be to God.

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD

JESUS, GOD'S GREATEST GIFT

The build-up to Christmas and the festive season has a way of leaving many people tired and stressed as many tasks call for our attention. It is probably impossible to avoid much of this as the feast of Christmas marks the end of the year and the beginning of the summer break. The readings for today can help each of us to determine more clearly what are our major priorities as Christians in preparing for Christmas.

Within the readings today two dimensions of our preparation are stressed. The first is the call to witness to our faith by sharing in God's life-giving, freeing, and healing love. The second dimension is that of finding time to give thanks and praise to God for the gifts we have received through the presence of Jesus among us.

Isaiah's mission of proclaiming liberty and God's love to those in exile comes out of his own experience of this love. Because of this experience, he is able to be a witness to what God is doing in his own day. John the Baptist provides us with a powerful example of a person of faith who is prepared to stand up and bear witness.

As Paul concludes the letter to the Thessalonians he reminds them that the best way to prepare for the Lord's return is by living at peace with one another and being constant in their prayer. One relationship nourishes the other. Making time for the Lord in prayer enables us to make time for each other.

CHRISTOPHER MONAGHAN CP

A SERVICE OF THE SOCIETY OF ST PAUL

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