

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 1, 2013

First Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 1

Gospel [Mt 24:37-44](#)

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

Spiritual Reflection:

A few years ago there was a group of Chilean miners who were trapped underground in a collapse mine. After many days of wondering if anyone was trying to rescue them a small hole opened up in the dirt ceiling above them and a small canister was lowered down. The miners were able to read the note that told them that help was indeed on the way and they were able to write a note informing those above that they were alright. A special advent began for the miners as they waited for their rescue with a new hope.

Spiritual Questions:

1. What do you need to be saved from this Advent?
2. How can your relationship with God deepen this year?
3. How does it make you feel to know that God has not abandoned you?
4. Can you name a time in your life when God powerfully came into it?
5. Have you shared your story with others?

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 8, 2013

Second Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 4

Gospel [Mt 3:1-12](#)

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: *A voice of one crying out in the desert, Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.* John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Spiritual Reflection:

John the Baptist's preaching of the need of repentance and conversion invokes in us the sobering realization that our time is limited and that life is both precious and fragile. He reminds us in the business of life what is really important. Will you listen to his message today?

Spiritual Questions:

1. If Jesus was to come today, would you be ready?
2. Are you living a radical life? Will God be alright with mediocrity?
3. Are you bearing good fruit?
4. What effects have you had on others lives, loved ones, your enemies?
5. What can you do to increase the amount of zeal you have in your life to doing good?

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 15, 2013

Third Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 7

Gospel [Mt 11:2-11](#)

When John the Baptist heard in prison of the works of the Christ, he sent his disciples to Jesus with this question, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we look for another?" Jesus said to them in reply, "Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the good news proclaimed to them. And blessed is the one who takes no offense at me." As they were going off, Jesus began to speak to the crowds about John, "What did you go out to the desert to see? A reed swayed by the wind? Then what did you go out to see? Someone dressed in fine clothing? Those who wear fine clothing are in royal palaces. Then why did you go out? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is the one about whom it is written: *Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way before you.* Amen, I say to you, among those born of women there has been none greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

Spiritual Reflection:

What are you looking for? As we struggle to live our lives are we finding the happiness we are looking for. Will we be happy at the end of our life with just being able to list our learning, sports and business achievements? Or are you looking for something more? Are you looking for a deep personal relationship with God?

Spiritual Questions:

1. Why do you come to Church on Sunday? Or Why do you not go to Church on Sunday?
2. What is it about the life of faith that makes it attractive to you?
3. What is your level of commitment to faith development?
4. When was the last time you left your busy life behind and went on a retreat?
5. When you come to Church do you come to get to know Jesus?

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 22, 2013

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Lectionary: 10

Gospel [Mt 1:18-24](#)

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about. When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found with child through the Holy Spirit. Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man, yet unwilling to expose her to shame, decided to divorce her quietly. Such was his intention when, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary your wife into your home. For it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her. She will bear a son and you are to name him Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: *Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means "God is with us."* When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Spiritual Reflection:

In today's Gospel - Matthew's version of Jesus' birth - the whole grand event depends on Joseph, whose life has been turned upside by the angel's news. Joseph accepts the son as his own, not as a matter of biology, but as a matter of love and compassion, of trust and faith. God's birth in our midst depends on human partners - a Mary, a Joseph, you, me - willing to claim the unwanted, love the helpless and neediest, put aside our fears and dare to hope that God is with us. In this season and in every season, may we imitate the compassion and faith of Joseph: to seek understanding and acceptance within our families even at the cost of our own expectations and hopes, to be sources of affirmation and support for our spouses and children.

Spiritual Questions:

1. How accepting of your family are you?
2. Can you give up your plans to do God's will?
3. Can you do it joyfully?
4. How are you claiming the unwanted and needed?
5. How can you be a source of affirmation for people?

BREAKING OPEN THE WORD



December 29, 2013

Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

Lectionary: 17

Gospel [Mt 2:13-15, 19-23](#)

When the magi had departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I tell you. Herod is going to search for the child to destroy him." Joseph rose and took the child and his mother by night and departed for Egypt. He stayed there until the death of Herod, that what the Lord had said through the prophet might be fulfilled; *Out of Egypt I called my son*. When Herod had died, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt and said, "Rise, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the child's life are dead." He rose, took the child and his mother, and went to the land of Israel. But when he heard that Archelaus was ruling over Judea in place of his father Herod, he was afraid to go back there. And because he had been warned in a dream, he departed for the region of Galilee. He went and dwelt in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, He *shall be called a Nazorean*.

Spiritual Reflection:

In Christ's birth, God touches human history: hope reigns, justice takes root, peace is possible. The challenge to each one of us is to take on the work of "Emmanuel" - to make God's presence visible and real by being his "arms" for the hurting, his "hands" to the needy, his "heart" for the grieving. The first place to start is our families

Spiritual Questions:

1. How does God willingness to get messy by becoming human mean to you?
2. Was Joseph's decision to move to Nazareth a decision influence by God?
3. What was a Nazorean and how did God fulfill the prophecy?
4. Archelaus was the son of Herod and was suspected to act like Herod. Jesus was the son of God and stepson of Joseph and would be expected to act like Joseph. How does being a child of God mean you should act?
5. How can you bring peace to your family?