

FROM THE RECTOR'S DESK...

**WHY ADVENT?**



With Advent Sunday we begin a new liturgical year and with it the opportunity to reorient our spiritual lives as we prepare to welcome Jesus at his First Coming at Christmas, and eagerly wait for his Second Coming at the end of time.

The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus* meaning "coming; arrival", which was translated from the Greek *parousia* from the New Testament. The emphasis during Advent is on the four final things: death, judgment, heaven and hell. We can't avoid death; we will be judged when Christ returns as the Nicene Creed teaches us; heaven and the life of the world to come is what we look for; hell is the alternative to be avoided.

The New Testament doesn't explicitly mention a Season of Advent, or for that matter a Season of Christmas, a Season of Epiphany, a Season of Lent, or a Season of Easter. But we do learn from the Old Testament, God did instruct either directly or through the priests and prophets they keep annual observances...seasons.

Passover (the word isn't found in the Bible) celebrates the departure of the Israelites from slavery as recorded in Exodus and lasts for eight days. Hanukkah celebrates the rededication of the Second Temple in Jerusalem in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Century BC described in the Apocryphal Book of I Maccabees. Hanukkah also lasts for eight days. It's interesting to note Hanukkah begins on Christmas Eve this year.

The Church's liturgical observances, like those within Judaism, developed over the centuries. We don't know when the period of preparation leading up to Christmas we now known as Advent began. The earliest mention of Advent is in 480 AD. It was universally adopted within Western Christianity, often with local diocesan variations, by the late 14<sup>th</sup> Century AD.

The liturgical color used during Advent is violet, with the exception of the Third Sunday in Advent when rose replaces violet. Violet is the color for repentance and teaches us Advent is a Penitential Season...a time for reflection, self-examination, and repentance.

We commence our Liturgical Journey through Advent with the Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath on the First Sunday in Advent. The Advent Wreath is visually compelling and highly instructive. The Scriptural passages read during the lighting of the candles on the Advent Wreath take us from prophecy to fulfillment of those prophecies in the birth of Jesus...

...On the First Sunday in Advent, we hear God's assurance of pardon as recorded in Isaiah 40.1-5. God will not abandon us and leave us to suffer. He has forgiven our sins and will reveal his glory to us. We are to prepare a straight road and get ready to receive him.



...On the Second Sunday in Advent, we hear the prophecy in Malachi 3.1-5. God will send his messenger to prepare the way before the Lord arrives. The prophecy was fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist.

...On the Third Sunday in Advent, called *Gaudete* (Rejoice) Sunday from the opening word in Latin to the Introit, we lighten things up a bit. The pink or rose candle signifies a relaxation of the penitential disciplines of the Season. There is a reason to rejoice even as we hear the prophecy from Isaiah 53.3-12 foretelling our Lord's Passion.

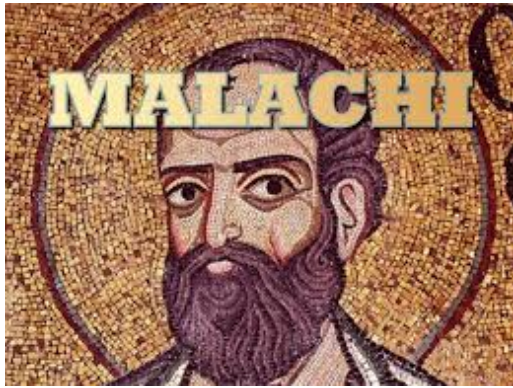
...On the Fourth Sunday in Advent we hear the joyous news Gabriel brings to Mary in Saint Luke 1.26-33. She will have a son and his name will be Jesus. He will be called the Son of the Most High. We light the fourth candle on the Advent Wreath to proclaim God does not speak to us in blazing flashes, but rather with a fragile flame, a baby.

Why Advent? Advent is about asking God to help us, renew, refresh and reorient our Spiritual lives..."*now in the time of this mortal life, in which thy Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the quick and the dead, we may rise to life immortal, through him who liveth and reigneth with thee and the Holy Ghost, now and ever. Amen.*" (Book of Common Prayer, Page 90)

Since Advent Sunday is also the Church's New Year's Day...let me wish you a Happy New Year!

Father Craig Looney+

## Advent Bible Study



During the Sundays in Advent this year we will be reading and discussing the Old Testament Book of Malachi. Little is known about the author. Although **Malachi** is a proper name, it may not be the actual name of the author. The Hebrew meaning of the word “Malachi” is “My Messenger” and may have been used as a pseudonym by the real writer, to avoid possible retribution because of his prophecies. Please join us at 10:30 AM in the Library on the Sundays in Advent, while we “read, mark, learn, and inward digest” Malachi’s rich message of hope.

## The Winter Ember Days



In the *Book of Common Prayer* (Page li) A Table of Fasts designates the Ember Days as OTHER DAYS OF FASTING, ON WHICH THE CHURCH REQUIRES SUCH A MEASURE OF ABSTINENCE AS IS MORE ESPECIALLY SUITED TO EXTRAORDINARY ACTS AND EXERCISES OF DEVOTION. The capitalization suggests we should take the Ember Days seriously.

The word *ember* is often misunderstood to refer to glowing ashes (embers) in a fireplace. The *ember* in Ember Days derives from the Latin *quatuor tempora*...meaning “four seasons”. Ember Days were originally associated with various plantings and harvests occurring roughly at the four seasons. Today they are days of fasting and prayer for the increase in vocations to the ordained ministry (*BCP*, Pages 260-261). Please pray men will offer themselves to the “ministry of reconciliation” in Christ’s Church.

The Winter Ember Days are the Wednesday, Friday and Saturday following December 13, the Feast of Saint Lucy, Martyr (died 304 AD, Syracuse, Italy, Roman Empire). Lucy’s Latin name *Lucia* means “light”. According to tradition, Lucy consecrated her virginity to God. However, her mother arranged for Lucy to marry the young man of a wealthy pagan family. When Lucy refused to marry the young man, he accused her of being a Christian and she was arrested. She was executed during the Diocletianic Persecution. Her feast day is celebrated widely in Scandinavian countries with processions of young girls wearing crowns of lighted candles...welcoming the return of longer days and light after the long dark winter. There is a connection between her feast day and Advent...the season we prepare to welcome Jesus, the Light of the World, that shines in darkness and can never be put out (*St. John 1.5*).

## Christmas



***Tuesday, December 24, 2024***  
***Christmas Eve***

4:00 PM Mass for Christmas Eve & Sermon

***Wednesday, December 25, 2024***  
***Christmas Day***

10:00 AM Mass for Christmas Day & Sermon

***Sunday, December 29, 2024***  
***The First Sunday after Christmas***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour, No Discussion Group

***Sunday, January 5, 2025***  
***The Second Sunday after Christmas***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour, Discussion Group



## Epiphany



***Monday, January 6, 2025***  
***The Epiphany of our Lord***

12:15 PM Mass & Homily

***Sunday, January 12, 2025***  
***The First Sunday after the Epiphany***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour followed by Vestry Meeting  
No Discussion Group

***Sunday, January 19, 2025***  
***The Second Sunday after the Epiphany***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour, Discussion Group

***Sunday, January 26, 2025***  
***The Third Sunday after the Epiphany***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Annual Parish Corporation Meeting  
Coffee Hour, No Discussion Group

***Sunday, February 2, 2025***  
***The Presentation of Christ in the Temple***  
*Commemorate the Fourth Sunday after the Epiphany*

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour, Discussion Group

***Sunday, February 9, 2025***  
***The Fifth Sunday after the Epiphany***

9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour, Discussion Group

## Paul Saw the Light



The remarkable conversion of Saul of Tarsus on the Road to Damascus is recorded in Acts 9.1-19. In the words of Hymn #114 in the *Hymnal 1940*... "*Saul, the Church's spoiler, came breathing threats and hate*". Saul's reputation as a persecutor of the Church was well known among Christians. He went about the country looking for followers of the "Way of the Lord" so he could have them arrested. God had something else in mind for him.

Before Saul reached Damascus a bright light blinded him and he fell from his horse. A voice said to him, "Saul, Saul! Why do you persecute me?" Saul asked, "Who are you Lord?" The voice replied, "I am Jesus, whom you persecute."

Saul was told to go into the city and find a Christian named Ananias. The Lord told Ananias to expect Saul. He was understandably confused and nervous about welcoming a man whose personal mission had been to stamp out the Church. But the Lord told Ananias to welcome Saul and lay hands on him to restore his sight. Saul was baptized and began to teach in the Synagogue at Damascus.

Saint Luke records in Acts 13.13, Saul is now called Paul. This is not so much a name change as it is Luke's way of showing Paul is now focusing his ministry toward the Gentiles. He would have been known by both his Hebrew name Saul and his Latin name Paul (from Paulus).

There was no one better qualified to be the Apostle to the Gentiles than Paul. He was well educated and spoke to them in ways they understood. In 1 Corinthians 15.9-11, Paul says, "For I am the least of the apostles---I do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted God's church. But by God's grace, I am what I am."

Saul the Church's spoiler became Paul the Apostle. Jesus got his attention on the Road to Damascus. His literal and spiritual blindness was transformed; Paul saw the Light that is Jesus...and he couldn't wait to spread the Good News. It was an Epiphany orchestrated by Jesus himself. The Conversion of Saint Paul is commemorated on January 25 (*Book of Common Prayer, Page 229*).

## The Meeting

We don't often get the opportunity to observe The Presentation of Christ in the Temple, also called The Purification of Saint Mary the Virgin (*Book of Common Prayer*, Page 231), since it is celebrated on February 2 and frequently occurs during Pre-Lent. This year it falls on the first Sunday in February.



The event described in the Gospel for the Day (St. Luke 2.22-40) took place 40 days after the birth of Jesus. Luke's account combines the ritual purification rite of Mary after childbirth and the redemption of Jesus in accordance with the Law (Leviticus 12, Exodus 13). Mary and Joseph brought Jesus to the Temple to offer him up to God, and made a "sin offering" of two doves. The two doves are an indication the Holy Family was poor.

Eastern Orthodox Christians call this day by the Greek word *Hypapante*...The Meeting. When Jesus is presented to the aged Simeon, a devout man God had promised would not die before he saw the Messiah, he praises God in the words of the *Nunc dimittis* said at Evening Prayer. The prophetess Anna, who never left the Temple, also praised God. The Presentation of Jesus in the Temple is an Epiphany...a startling appearance of the One who would redeem the world.

This day is also called Candlemas, after the custom of blessing candles used at the High Altar throughout the year, and individual tapers for the congregation. After the reading of the Lesson from Malachi appointed for the Epistle, the candles will be blessed and the tapers distributed to the Congregation. The tapers are lighted and remain lighted through the reading of the Gospel and Nicene Creed. The people take the blessed tapers home, as a symbol Jesus is the Light of the World.

## Bishop Scarlett's Visit

We were pleased to welcome the Right Reverend Stephen C. Scarlett, Bishop Ordinary for the Diocese of the Holy Trinity, to Saint Joseph Parish, on Sunday, October 27, the Twenty-second Sunday after Trinity. The Bishop celebrated and preached at the 9:00 AM Parish Mass. Afterward, everyone enjoyed a festive potluck brunch in the Parish Hall. In the next column are a few photos of the brunch.



## Librarian's Corner by Rebekah Shapiro



During Advent, we meditate on the Four Last Things: Death, Judgment, Heaven, and Hell. Well, cybersecurity issues don't follow the Church Calendar, so it was back in the spring that work had me thinking about Hell, particularly Dante's 7th Circle of Hell, where he depicts the Usurers. In Dante's time (around 1300), the sin of usury meant loaning out money at any amount of interest. In Dante's allegory *Inferno* (Italian for "Hell"), the Usurers are forced to stare at the barren ground forever, their heads weighed down by the coin purses hung around their necks. Here is what had me thinking about the Usurers forever waiting for the ground to grow food while they just watched:



I was reviewing a lawsuit about cryptocurrencies and non fungible tokens (NFTs). Cryptocurrencies are “coins” made up of computer code. Unlike regular currency, these “coins” can only be made using a lengthy series of computer operations to generate (“mint”) each one. Because it takes a lengthy series of computer operations to mint each coin, they are not minted quickly, and so the total number in existence does not increase quickly. This relative rarity allows them to be used as a medium of exchange. The oldest and most famous cryptocurrency is Bitcoin, but there are thousands of others. The coins that make up a particular cryptocurrency are like dimes in that each is the equivalent of the other. NFTs are artwork made with a computer. Each NFT is unique, and they are usually images.

The lawsuit alleged that the defendant owned a large sum of a particular cryptocurrency and wanted to exchange that cryptocurrency for another cryptocurrency while making a profit. The defendant used the first cryptocurrency to develop a video game and NFTs. The NFTs would represent the players in the game. The NFTs could only be purchased with the second cryptocurrency, and whoever bought one of these NFTs gained access to play the video game, which allegedly was never completed. Buying one of the NFTs also gave the purchaser access to the computer code needed to “mint” a third cryptocurrency, which was supposed to be the equivalent of stock in the enterprise that ran the video game.

There were so many steps to the alleged scheme that I kept asking myself, “How does this cryptocurrency or that NFT relate to the kind of thing I can use to buy a box of cereal?” It seemed like the overall allegation was that the defendant had taken nothing (cryptocurrency), but somehow ended up with something (United States Dollars).

There are two reasons why charging any interest on a loan was traditionally considered a sin and a crime. First, Dante’s allegory reflects the wrong I suspected in my cryptocurrencies puzzle, an evil focused on how receiving interest affects the lender. The lender seeks something for nothing. He does no work, and yet he expects to receive more than he put in, which is as lazy and foolish as expecting food to grow from soil where you have not planted seeds.

In contrast, modern law focuses on how paying interest affects the borrower. For example, under the California Constitution (unless one of the exceptions in the California Civil Code applies), a loan is usurious if the interest is higher than 10% simple annual interest or 5% plus the rate established by the Federal Reserve, whichever is higher. If the loan is to buy personal, family, or household goods, then 10% simple annual interest is the highest allowed rate, regardless of the rate set by the Fed. Making a loan at a higher rate is loan sharking, a felony punishable by up to five years in prison.

The Constitution’s distinction between loans for necessary goods and other loans is related to the second reason usury was a sin and a crime. Traditionally it was understood that to charge interest was to take advantage of the poor and vulnerable. The lender already had more than he needed, and the borrower was already in extremes, yet the lender demanded that the borrower pay him back more than the principal, which is unfair to the poor.

The courts of the Church of England heard civil suits and criminal prosecutions concerning usury for three hundred years after Dante. But eventually the understanding of “usury” was narrowed to only the most egregious situations. Historians are split as to why. The cynics argue that borrowing money became so important to governments and economies, especially in wartime and for the colonization of the Americas, that those charged with teaching and regulating virtue gave up preaching against usury. Others say that as economies developed and borrowing became necessary to keep up, it was not just the poor who took out loans, and not just for necessities. Governments and the upper classes took out loans to fund wars and business enterprises. Sometimes these wars were lost, and sometimes these businesses failed, so sometimes the lenders didn’t get paid back, and lenders were entitled to receive some compensation for accepting that risk.

Dante Alighieri (1265-1321) was a Florentine poet. His masterpiece, one of the first books written in Italian, is the *Divine Comedy*, which is divided into three parts: *Inferno* (Hell), *Purgatorio* (Purgatory), and *Paradiso* (Heaven). The Parish’s translation is by Dorothy Sayers, an Anglican novelist, playwright, and translator. Sayers’s translation has extensive notes by Sayers from an Anglican perspective. Because of the extensive notes, it is a preferred translation for non-specialists and therefore is readily available at bookstores.

## Requiescat in pace

Sally Lou Bernstein (Bork)  
1934-2024

Long-time parishioner Sally Bernstein died at her home at Sterling Court in San Mateo in September at the age of 90. Sally was born in 1934 in Williston, a small city in North Dakota not too far from the Canadian border. Her parents were Rudolph L. Bork DDS and Esther F. Bork (Falkenstein), always known as Doc and Esther.



Sally was pre-deceased by her husband, Jerry. Her sister, Cora Jean Kleppe, died in March 2024, at the age of 95.

Sally attended the University of North Dakota at Grand Forks and graduated from the University of Minnesota with a Bachelors Degree in Dental Hygiene in 1956. She had a successful career working for several dentists in San Mateo, Burlingame and Palo Alto.

Sally and Cora Jean were for many years, members of the Saint Joseph Parish Altar Guild. They faithfully carried out their work with quiet dignity and reverence. Sally continued to attend Sunday Mass, determined not to let her mobility challenges stop her from walking the short distance from Sterling Court to the Church. She will always be remembered for her upbeat and positive outlook on life, and for saying she was “fabulous and fantastic” when greeting everyone after Mass.

A Requiem Mass was held for Sally at Saint Joseph Parish on Saturday, October 5. *May she rest in peace, and rise in glory.*

## 2025 Ordo Kalendar



2025 Order Kalendars are now available. The Ordo Kalendar conforms to the 1928 *Book of Common Prayer* and American and Anglican Missals. The Kalendar includes feast days observed by American Anglicans: the Beheading of Charles I, King and Martyr (January 30); the Bestowal of the American Episcopate (November 14); and the Preservation of the American

Episcopate (January 28). Also included is a useful Table for finding Easter Day through the Year 2050 and notes on the colors used for vestments and Altar hangings during the Church Year. There is no charge for the Ordo Kalendar.

## Parish Directory

We're updating the Parish Directory. A draft copy of the Parish Directory will be available for review on the four Sundays of Advent and on January 5, 2025 the Second Sunday after Christmas Day. Please note any changes to home address, e-mail address, land and cell line numbers, and family members you wanted listed. We plan to distribute the 2025 Parish Directory at the Annual Parish Corporation Meeting on Sunday, January 26.

## 2025 Every Member Canvass

*You are the light of the world...Let your light shine before others.*

Matthew 5.14-16

Every Member Canvass letters and pledge cards for 2025 will be mailed to all parishioners the first week of December. The Parish relies on the generosity of our parishioners in meeting the day-to-day financial obligations of the Parish and in preparing a Proposed Budget to present to the Parish at the Annual Parish Corporation Meeting (APCM) on Sunday, January 26, 2025.

Please give prayerful consideration when completing your 2025 Pledge Card and if you have not practiced tithing in the past...try it...you might be surprised at the results. Pledge cards are due back in the Parish Office by Sunday, January 5, 2025.

Parishioners who return a signed and dated Pledge Card to the Parish Office are entitled to vote at the APCM and serve on the Vestry.

ALL THINGS COME  
OF THEE, O LORD

## Annual Parish Meeting

The Annual Parish Corporation Meeting (APCM) will be held immediately after Mass on Sunday, January 26, 2025. Parishioners who have submitted a Pledge Card for 2025 are entitled to vote at the meeting. Voting members who will be unable to attend the meeting may submit a Proxy Vote prior to commencement of the meeting.

At the APCM we will review the Minutes of the 2024 APCM, the 2024 Financial Report, and hear reports from the Rector, Senior Warden and Junior Warden. We will elect new Vestry members or extend current Vestry member's terms that have expired (as approved by voting members at the 2016 APCM).

The Parisher Treasurer will present the 2025 proposed Budget for discussion and approval. We will also elect lay delegates to the Diocesan Synod to be held at Saint Matthew's Parish, Newport Beach CA, on Friday, June 20, 2025.



## New Altar Carpet



We wish to thank the anonymous donor of the Persian Carpet now gracing the Sanctuary. It has long been a tradition in the Church to cover the Sanctuary or steps leading to the High Altar with a fine Persian or other Oriental carpet. The carpet adds beauty and dignity to the Sanctuary and symbolizes this is Sacred Space.

## December Feasts

December 13: Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr (died 304 AD): See Ember Day article on Page 2 for story about Saint Lucy.

December 21(*BCP, Pages 228-229*): Saint Thomas the Apostle, was one of the Twelve Apostles. He is also called Didymus (Greek meaning "the twin"). He is popularly called "Doubting Thomas" for not believing Jesus rose from the dead on Easter. He confesses Jesus to be "Lord and My God" only after seeing Jesus for himself. According to Massey Shepherd, author of *the Oxford American Prayer Book Commentary*, to Saint John the Evangelist, Thomas personalizes all those who have doubted the "Stupendous miracle of the Resurrection", and represents all those whose faith has been steadied and confirmed by the material proofs of physical experience. Thomas is thought to have martyred in India in 72 AD.

December 26 (*BCP, Pages 99-100*): Saint Stephen, Deacon and Martyr. Stephen is often called "The Protomartyr". He is the first Christian martyr. He is mentioned in Acts 6 and one of the Greek-speaking Jews chosen to distribute food to widows. Acts 7, records his trial for blasphemy. He was stoned to death c. 33-37 AD, an event witnessed and approved of by Saul of Tarsus.

December 27 (*BCP, Pages 101-102*): Saint John, Apostle and Evangelist. John was one of the Twelve Apostles. He is the author of the Fourth Gospel and traditionally of the

three Epistles of John. He is also traditionally the author of Revelation, which he received while under house arrest on the Island of Patmos. He is considered the first Bishop of Ephesus. In John 19.26-27, at the point of his death on the cross, Jesus entrusts his mother, Mary, into John's care, an indication Joseph had died. John died of natural causes c. 100 AD in Ephesus.

December 28 (*BCP, Pages 102-103*): The Holy Innocents. The Gospel from Saint Matthew 2.13-18 records The Holy Family fleeing to Egypt and the horrific murder of all boys in Bethlehem two years old and younger by Herod Agrippa. Matthew sees this as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Jeremiah 31.15, "A sound was heard in Ramah, the sound of bitter weeping. Rachel crying for her children; she refuses to be comforted, for they are dead."

## January Feasts

January 1 (*BCP, Pages 105-106*): The Circumcision of Christ. This is the Octave Day of Christmas. Under the Law of Moses recorded in Leviticus 12.3, male children are to be circumcised eight days after birth. The child was also named at this time, so this day is also called The Holy Name of Jesus.

January 24: Saint Timothy, Bishop and Martyr. Timothy was born in Lystra or Derbe in Galatia, Asia Minor (present-day Turkey). He was a disciple of Saint Paul and later became his constant companion on his missionary journeys. Timothy was well respected within the Church. Tradition holds he was martyred in Ephesus c. 97AD.

January 25 (*BCP, Pages 229-231*): The Conversion of Saint Paul. See article on Page 3 about Paul's remarkable conversion.

January 28: Preservation of the American Episcopate. On this day in 1978, the first four bishops for the Continuing Church were consecrated in Denver, Colorado, ensuring Catholic Faith, Apostolic Order and Evangelical Witness was maintained in the American Church.

January 30: Charles I of England, King and Martyr. Charles was born in Dunfermline Palace, Dunfermline, Scotland, on November 19, 1600. The Palace is in ruins and adjacent to Dumfermline Abbey, which the Rector visited in October. Charles was a staunch believer in the Divine Right of Kings and an episcopal form of church governance. He was accused of being an absolute monarch and was tried for his refusal to renounce the Apostolic Succession, stating he believed the English Church was truly Catholic. He was condemned to death and executed on this day in 1649.

## Schedule

Sundays – 9:00 AM Parish Mass & Sermon  
Coffee Hour and Discussion Group  
Weekdays/Holy Days as announced  
Sacrament of Penance by Appointment

The Reverend Father Craig Looney, Rector  
The Reverend Father Herbert Plimpton, MD, Assisting

*THE CONTINUATION OF ANGLICANISM: We affirm that the Church of our fathers, sustained by the most Holy Trinity, lives yet...are determined to continue in the Catholic Faith, Apostolic Order, Orthodox Worship and Evangelical Witness of the traditional Anglican Church.*

[www.saintjosephparish.net](http://www.saintjosephparish.net)

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