

First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2017

GOSPEL MARK 13:33-37

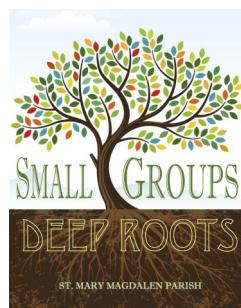
Jesus said to his disciples:

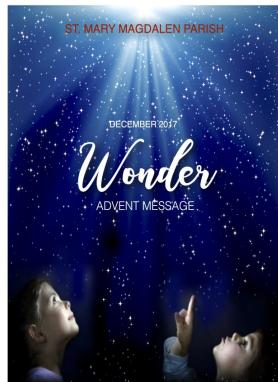
"Be watchful! Be alert!
You do not know when the time will come.

It is like a man traveling abroad. He leaves home and places his servants in charge, each with his own work, and orders the gatekeeper to be on the watch.

Watch, therefore; you do not know when the Lord of the house is coming, whether in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning.

May he not come suddenly and find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to all:
"Watch!"





First Sunday of Advent

December 3, 2017

GOSPEL MARK 13:33-37

The season of Advent often hits us like a harsh beam of light and the countdown to Christmas is on! How often do we end up disappointed and focused on everything that does not get done. Perhaps the joyful WONDER that should be Advent gets turned off because we let ourselves get overwhelmed by the never ending to do list. However, Christ does not come to lower our expectations but to exceed them.

We live in a day and age where we no longer have to wait. We have prepared family meals, same-day delivery, and instant internet connection wherever we go. Waiting doesn't seem so appealing. But maybe it's what we need in our lives. We are caught up in the hectic schedules of holiday shopping, presents, parties and busyness. We forget why we are doing all these things.

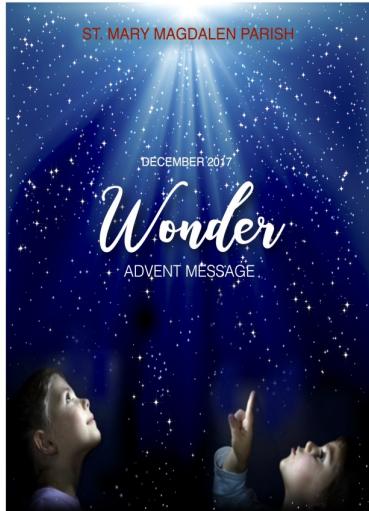
How do you feel when you find yourself having to wait? Can we see that waiting for something actually “opens” up a space in our heart. Something is missing—something is absent—someone?

Could part of our frustration in this holy Season be because we want to find happiness in things, gadgets, latest toys and all that glitters. Mathew Kelly says, “The modern search for happiness is governed by individualism (what will make ME happy?), hedonism (I want to live with the most pleasures now), and minimalism (the least I have to do to get what I want)....” (*Rediscover Advent 2011*, p 2)

This time of Advent and our parish message of Wonder invites us to anticipate Christ’s coming and de-throne the “god of me”. How can I do that this week? (possible answer: Corporal works of mercy helps us to focus on our neighbor and not on ourselves.)

How can I balance celebrating my faith along with enjoying the festivities of the season? And not let materialism drive my actions?





Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2017

GOSPEL MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet:

*Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you;
he will prepare your way.*

A voice of one crying out in the desert:

*"Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths."*

John the Baptist appeared in the desert

proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being

baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

John was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist.

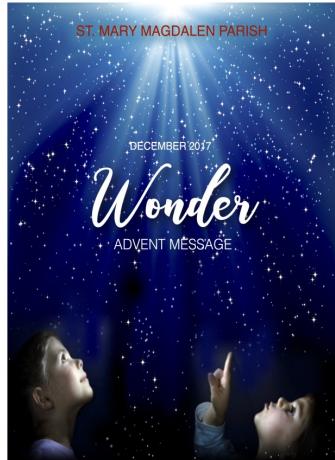
He fed on locusts and wild honey.

And this is what he proclaimed:

"One mightier than I is coming after me.

I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."





Second Sunday of Advent

December 10, 2017

GOSPEL MARK 1:1-8

The gospel of Mark (today's Gospel reading) starts with the words "The beginning of the gospel...." Jewish listeners would catch the depth of those words. They would immediately think of the Genesis account where "in the beginning" God created the heavens and the earth. Here Mark is pointing to a new beginning, a new creation as Jesus enters into this fallen world to create it anew. This time, I am intimately involved in the re-creation. This new creation involves my life, my heart, my desires, my family, my friends. God wants to create me anew. **Advent is a time of new beginnings. Therein lies the Wonder.** Can God really do something new in my life? Can God really re-create a troubled marriage? Difficult children? Dire health or financial situations? God wants to create anew my life and heart; will I let him?

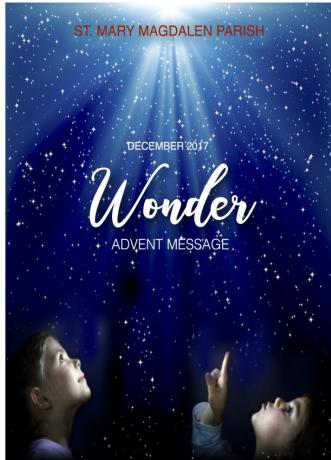
We hear John the Baptist described as a "voice crying out in the wilderness" to prepare the way. These days we are constantly surrounded by distracting noises and images that cry out for our attention: the news, music, games, podcasts, TV, social media.

What in your life might be causing noise pollution and keeping you from seeing the Light of Christ and hearing His call to you?

John the Baptist called people out of sin, the darkness of their lives and to walk in the light of Christ. How will you step toward the light of Christ this Advent season and invite Christ to make things new in your life?

Advent Parish Reconciliation times are Tuesday, December 12, 10 am and 7 pm; every Saturday in December, 3-4 pm; Thursday Dec 21, 11-12 noon and 6-7 pm; and Friday, Dec 22, 11-12 noon and 6-7 pm. **Why not go as a small group to experience this life changing encounter with Christ?**





Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2017

GOSPEL JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

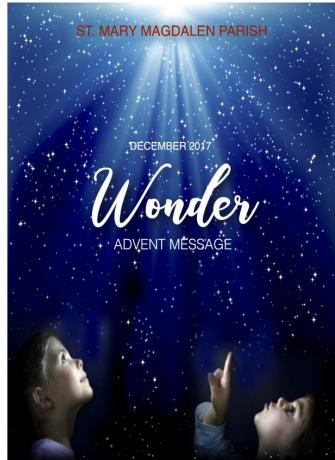
A man named John was sent from God.
He came for testimony, to testify to the light,
so that all might believe through him.
He was not the light, but came to testify to the light.

And this is the testimony of John.
When the Jews from Jerusalem sent priests
and Levites to him to ask him, "Who are you?" He admitted
and did not deny it, but admitted, "I am not the Christ." So they
asked him, "What are you then? Are you Elijah?" And he said,
"I am not." "Are you the Prophet?" He answered, "No." So they
said to him, "Who are you, so we can give an answer to those
who sent us? What do you have to say for yourself?"

He said: "*I am the voice of one crying out in the desert,
'make straight the way of the Lord,'*" as Isaiah the prophet
said."

Some Pharisees were also sent. They asked him,
"Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ or Elijah or
the Prophet?" John answered them, "I baptize with water;
but there is one among you whom you do not recognize,
the one who is coming after me, whose sandal strap I am not
worthy to untie." This happened in Bethany across the Jordan,
where John was baptizing.





Third Sunday of Advent

December 17, 2017

GOSPEL JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28

Last week, the readings of the Mass invited us to slow down and consider the words of John, “prepare the way of the Lord.” Advent can be a time to focus not on the external trappings of the Christmas season, but on the “reason for the Season.” We are called to be child-like in our anticipation of the wonder of the birth of Jesus.

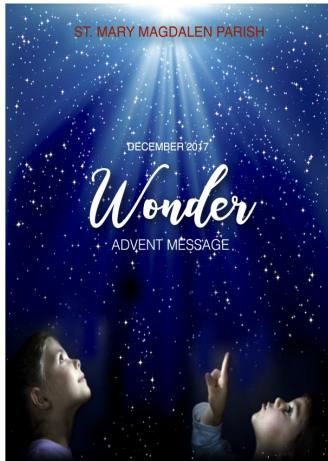
The Lord is near; excitement builds as we anticipate Christmas, for all its spiritual and materials gifts.

Even in our anticipation, the Church asks us, “Do we recognize the Lord when he comes?” The Pharisees did not understand God’s holy prophet who had been baptizing with water. John told them that the One to come is mightier than He and, yet, the Pharisees lacked faith in God’s promise of a Savior. Hope leads to recognition.

Is there a situation or area of your life that you find it difficult to hope in God’s plan and wonder in His greatness?

When have I missed recognizing Jesus in others?





Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2017

GOSPEL LUKE 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a town of Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin's name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, "Hail, full of grace! The Lord is with you." But she was greatly troubled at what was said and pondered what sort of greeting this might be. Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

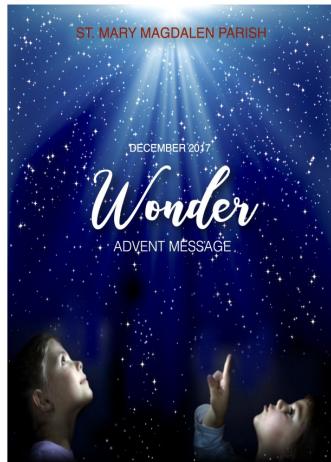
"Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give him the throne of David his father, and he will rule over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

But Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I have no relations with a man?"

And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God."

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.





Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 24, 2017

GOSPEL LUKE 1:26-38

Bishop Barron comments that the Bible is like a good story told by an author. Like a good author, there are hints and foreshadowings of future events. The Bible is like this. The Hebrew Scriptures is filled with hints and foreshadowings of the Messiah; filled with covenants that are fulfilled in the one eternal covenant; filled with hints of people and places that culminate in the eternal banquet in the eternal heaven. In this sense Bishop Barron says that biblical history “rhymes.”

Today’s Gospel of the Annunciation, seen through this lens, is the beginning of that definitive fulfillment.

So too in our life. Our life rhymes when we look at the past and see how God has been preparing us for the present. **Can you think of a time (looking back in hindsight) how God was preparing you for the challenges you face now?**

On the last Sunday of Advent, we hear Mary’s “yes” to God’s invitation to be the mother of His Son. God’s promise of a Savior was fulfilled with Mary’s fiat and the Word became flesh. Mary’s womb became the new Ark of Covenant; containing the Law of Love and the Bread of Life (the biblical rhymes shine forth).

Where in your daily life does your “yes” to God bring forth Christ in your home, work, and relationships?

Advent can be an excellent opportunity to spiritually “clean our house” in preparation for Jesus’s coming. In what ways has your faith in God been renewed this Advent season?

