

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 2, 2018 C

Facilitator: *Let us take a minute to consciously acknowledge that we are in the presence of God and ask Him to help us to hear the word He wants us to hear this week.*

Pause for a moment and then play a religious song.

Environment note: If possible, during the Advent Season, set up an advent wreath on the center table covered with purple cloth. Light the wreath before you begin.

Opening prayer: *Father in heaven, our hearts desire the warmth of your love and our minds are searching for the light of your word. Increase our longing for Christ our Savior and give us the strength to grow in love, that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence and welcoming the light of his truth. We ask this in the name of Jesus the Lord. Amen.*

Introduction to Luke

In our Liturgical Calendar, Cycle C is The Year of Luke. In its introduction to this wonderful Gospel, the authors of *Living Liturgy '04* write:

*While we may not know a lot about Luke, most people know a good deal about his gospel. Some of the most cherished stories about Jesus are reported by Luke: the annunciation to Mary, the birth in a manger, the disciples on the road to Emmaus. Some of the New Testament's most memorable characters are **found** in Luke: the diminutive but resourceful Zacchaeus, the aged and astonished Elizabeth and Zechariah, the hospitable Martha and the attentive Mary. Some of Jesus' most beloved parables—brimming with poignancy and compassion, and universal in their broad religious and humanitarian appeal—are jewels of Luke's gospel: the Good Samaritan, the prodigal son, the rich man and poor Lazarus, the Pharisee and the tax collector. The backbone of the Church's daily prayer comes from Luke's gospel: Zechariah's Canticle at Morning Prayer, Mary's Magnificat at evening prayer, and Simeon's Canticle at night prayer.*

*His gospel is such a treasure trove of themes that it has invited numerous nicknames, such as *The Gospel of Joy*, *The Gospel of the Holy Spirit*, *of Prayer*, *of the Poor*, among others. Other obvious themes include warnings against wealth; frequent meals with sinners; inclusion of women; and concern for tax collectors, lepers, and outcasts. Luke's portrait of Jesus is perhaps the most beloved and easily approachable of all the gospels. Luke's Jesus is the embodiment of divine compassion. Indeed, Luke's portrayal of Jesus is at the heart of his proclamation of the "good news."*

Response to last week's word: [Facilitator briefly recalls last week's Gospel.] *Let us spend a few minutes sharing how the word we heard God speak to us last week has unfolded in our lives during the week.*

Facilitator: The purpose of Advent is to prepare us to celebrate Jesus's birth. The first reading during the Advent Season takes us back to Old Testament times, when Israel looked forward to the coming of the Messiah. Jesus is the one who fulfills all of the messianic prophecies. Today's first reading says that the longed-for Messiah will come from the stock of David. The focus of the Gospel is the Second Coming of Jesus. The early Christians believe that the Second Coming is near and will be preceded by cosmic signs. The disciples are urged to wait in prayer and vigilance. In the second reading, Paul shows his people how to prepare for Christ's Second Coming.

Let us listen to God's word to hear what it is He wants to say to us in these readings today. As you hear a word, you may want to underline it or write it down to remember.

Read the first reading, the psalm and the second reading, pausing briefly after each one.

FIRST READING: Jeremiah 33:14-16

Commenting on this reading, the authors of *Living the Word* (2004) write:

When you hear a storyteller start out, “Once upon a time...” you realize that what follows is most likely a fictional account (even if, at times, the tale may be based on some historical realities). In much the same way, the Bible often has “code words” that signal what kind of passage we are dealing with. Today’s first reading from the prophet Jeremiah begins, “The days are coming, says the Lord...” For any student of the Bible, this phrase clearly signals that what follows is a messianic prophecy, a passage looking deep into the future, attempting to describe the indescribable: what it will be like when the Messiah finally comes and sets things right in the world. Originally spoken as words of consolation to exiles in Babylon, urging them not to give up hope in the restoration of the Davidic dynasty promised long ago, this passage assumed over time much larger proportions as a guarantee that Israel would never be abandoned completely by God, no matter what the fortunes of its kings or other rulers might be at any given time in its history.

Jerusalem, a city whose name means “foundation of peace,” is given here a new name: “The Lord Our Justice.” Implied in this is the premise that the city will have peace when justice is achieved. Recall the famous words of Pope Paul VI: “*If you want peace, work for justice.*”

RESPONSORIAL PSALM 25

In this psalm, we ask God to teach us his ways.

SECOND READING: 1Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

We have a “wish prayer” and an exhortation to a community who believes that the Second Coming of Christ is imminent. Paul prays that the Thessalonians “*grow in love*” for each other in preparation for the Second Coming or return of Jesus. He urges them to “*conduct themselves in a way pleasing to God.*”

PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

As we listen to this first reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our minds for the content.

**A participant reads the Gospel,
then all pause to reflect.**

As we listen to this second reading of the Gospel, let us listen with our hearts to what Jesus is saying to us.

Be aware of what draws us in and what part of the Gospel might be a challenge to embrace. You may want to underline or write down the word you hear.

**A participant reads the Gospel again,
then all pause to reflect.**

GOSPEL COMMENTARY: Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

Let us now read the Gospel commentary privately, underlining anything that strikes us.

Chapter 21 in Luke’s Gospel speaks about the destruction of the Temple, the fall of Jerusalem, and the end of the world – all terrifying events.

Jesus speaks about the coming of the Son of Man (at the end of the world). Using apocalyptic (“veiled”) language, Jesus presents images of both cosmic and political upheaval (“seas and waves roaring,” “nations in anguish”) to speak about this event. The unrighteous will be terrified by these events, but faithful disciples of Jesus need not fear, for the coming of the Son of Man will signal their deliverance and salvation.

Jesus exhorts his followers to “be on guard,” lest they fall into self-indulgence and forget God and his ways. There will be a day of reckoning for *all* people. The Gospel ends with an exhortation to pray and watch all that they *say* and *do* in the context of the Gospel. In other words, “What would Jesus say or do in this situation?” For the faithful disciple, the coming of the Son of Man will not be a fearful event. Rather, it will be a day of triumph and joy.

Having given the participants time to read the commentary, move into the faith-sharing questions.

FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what verse in the Gospel caught your attention. Why?

The facilitator can decide which is more helpful: to share the next questions with the whole group, or to share in smaller groups of three or four.

2. In the Gospel, Jesus speaks about pretty awful signs that will occur prior to his return. What is currently going on in our world (or Church) that can cause you to be frightened?

3. What can cause you or us to become spiritually drowsy?

4. The weeks prior to Christmas can become very focused on shopping. What can help you to be spiritually vigilant and keep your eyes fixed on Jesus – ‘the reason for the season’?

5. What is the one thing Jesus is saying to us in this Sunday’s Gospel about how a disciple should speak or act?



“A New Intimacy with Christ”
A Day of Reflection presented by
Deacon Jim & Pat Brogdan
Sat., Jan. 19, 8:30am–3:00pm
Divine Mercy Parish, Merritt Island
Tickets: \$12 Info: 321-405-2374
sccspacecoast@gmail.com

JOURNALING: *Having listened to God’s word and to others’ reflections on it, take a quiet moment to reflect on what you are hearing God say to you. Your response will be what you bring to Eucharist on Sunday, asking Jesus to help you respond as He asks of you. When ready, jot down your reflections.*

RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one possible way you can *act* on any of the readings. Suggestions: commit to awakening from spiritual drowsiness by using an Advent devotional; work hard to not allow the material side of the season pull you away from the spiritual aspect.

SHARED PRAYER ON THE READINGS

At this time, you are invited to spend a brief time in shared prayer flowing from today’s readings. For example: *“Jesus, increase my love for you and for the people in my life, especially for the people I find it hard to like or love.” “Jesus save me from all forms of spiritual drowsiness.”*

CONCLUDE WITH PRAYERS OF THANKSGIVING, PETITION AND INTERCESSION

FACILITATOR: Let us now conclude with prayers of thanksgiving, petition and intercession. What are we grateful for? For what and for whom do we wish to pray?

CLOSING PRAYER (together)

Lord, awaken us to your love and grant us your salvation, so we might bring new life to our world by what we say and do. Bless this new year of grace, and may our call to holiness alert the world to your transforming power.