

# THE LITURGICAL YEAR

## Cycle A – The Gospel of Matthew

### The Liturgical Year

The Liturgical Year is the way Mother Church places before us the main events and teachings in the life of Jesus. When we remember the events and stories in the life of Jesus, we make them as real to us as they were to those who first experienced them. We bring past events into the now. Thus, the Liturgical Year is not an historical look at past events, but the way that our Church invites us to enter and experience Christ who continues to be present and active in the events of our lives in the here and now.

### Cycle A –The Gospel of Matthew

Our liturgical calendar has three cycles: A, B, and C. A new cycle of readings begins each Advent. This year, we will be listening mainly to the Gospel according to Matthew. During the seven Sundays of the Easter season, we will be hearing the Good News according to John.

Each author of the four Gospels had a particular audience in mind, one with its own challenges and problems. Matthew's primary audience were fellow Jews who had become Christians. Also, after 70 A.D., when the Temple was destroyed by the Romans, Jewish Christians were expelled from the synagogue and treated as enemies of the Jewish God. This was a source of huge suffering for Jews who continued to love their Jewish roots after they accepted Jesus as the Messiah. One of Matthew's objectives was to show that all or nearly all of the prophecies in the Old Testament were fulfilled in Jesus; hence, he must be seen and recognized as the Messiah. One recurring line that we find in Matthew's Gospel is: *"This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken through the prophet."*

A second characteristic of Matthew's Gospel is its teaching style. We especially notice this aspect in his Gospel on the Sermon on the Mount (chps. 5, 6 & 7) in which Jesus is presented as the New Moses. Like Moses, he goes up on a mount where he presents the new law to his followers.

Thirdly, Matthew's writings are quintessentially the *Gospel of the Church*. Only Matthew's Gospel presents Jesus as founding a church (16:13-23). Only Matthew speaks of disputes being settled by the church.

### The Advent Season

We begin the Church's "Year of Grace" with the season of Advent, a time when the Church focuses first on the Lord's coming at the end of time, and then on his coming in history through his miraculous birth through the Virgin Mary. That mysterious birth unfolds during the Christmas season revealing its meaning for our salvation over the course of a series of feasts that include the Holy Family, Mary, Mother of God, Epiphany, and Baptism of the Lord. Each Sunday of Advent/Christmas, and each text on any given Sunday, is a doorway into the world of God's unbounded love revealed in the Word-made-flesh and remains present throughout all of history each and every time the Church proclaims, "The Word of the Lord!"

# FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

December 1, 2019 A

**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.**

**Opening prayer:** *God of history, present, past and future, be with us as we begin our Advent journey in this new liturgical year. Make us aware of your presence in one another and in all creation. Prepare us to celebrate your birth and to anticipate your coming at the end of time. Protect us from deeds of darkness and shed your light upon us. Help us to be spiritually awake to your comings in the events and encounters of daily life. We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.*

**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:** This weekend we begin a new Liturgical Year with the Advent/Christmas season. Four weeks of *Advent* prepare us to celebrate the First Coming of Jesus in Bethlehem. But they also urge us to be ready for his Second Coming and for his comings into our daily lives. During the *Twelve Days of Christmas*, we celebrate the manifestation of Jesus to the Jewish and Gentile world.

*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: Isaiah 2:1-5

Isaiah lives at a time when Israel is divided into two kingdoms—both of which are being threatened by the powerful Assyrians.

Isaiah is a prophet in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. During his ministry, when there prevail either wars or rumors of war, the people and the Kings fail to listen to and follow the ways of God. But Isaiah seeks to rise above the gloom and doom, looking forward to a much brighter future when his people will listen to and follow God's word. Peace will reign in the land—not only that, but other nations will be drawn to Jerusalem and they too will realize that God's ways are the best ways. For all this to happen, the nation must change its ways.

## RESPONSORIAL PSALM 122

In this song of joy and praise, the pilgrim proclaims the centrality of Jerusalem in Israel's life.

## SECOND READING: Romans 13:11-14

We detect a note of urgency here, as with Jesus in today's Gospel. Even though Paul is writing to a Christian community which has accepted Christ, their total conversion to his ways is far from complete. Hence, he urges them to "throw off deeds of darkness"—naming six such deeds—and to put on "the armor of light."

During this season of Advent, the Church urges us to do the same. We too must look into our hearts and,

with the help of the Holy Spirit, name those things in our lives that are preventing us from wholeheartedly committing to Jesus.

## PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL: Matthew 24:37-44

*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.*

## GOSPEL: Matthew 24:37-44

Jesus instructs his disciples on the importance of readiness for his *Second Coming*. To drive home his lesson, Jesus draws on what happened to the people who did not prepare for the Great Flood. They knew it was coming but they were so consumed with the affairs of everyday life that they failed to prepare. One exception was Noah who did get ready and was saved.

Like Noah we, as followers of Jesus, should be prepared for his Second Coming. The reference to the "two men" and "two women" is one of contrast. Externally, they seem alike, but internally, one is prepared for God's coming and the other is not. The clear message in this Gospel is: "Be ready!"

By selecting this reading for the first Sunday of Advent, the Church urges us to live our lives in *readiness* for the Lord's coming at the end of time, whether that *end time* is the culminating event of our individual lives or of all of human history.

### FAITH-SHARING QUESTIONS

1. Turn to the person next to you and share what word/s or image/s in the readings caught your attention. Did they comfort or challenge you or touch you in some way?

*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. Sadly, 'weapons of war' are now being used on a regular basis in our nation to kill many innocent people. On this controversial subject, do you think it is time for our government to do whatever it takes to make sure no ordinary citizen can have access to weapons of war?

3. In the second reading, Paul names six "works of darkness." Can you name one or two works of darkness that you sometimes, if not often, have to battle? What 'armor of light' helps you to fight the spiritual darkness?

4. What can cause you to miss God's comings in daily life? What can help you to be alert to his comings? Can you name a recent coming of God, Jesus, or the Holy Spirit in the events and encounters of your daily life?

### RESPONDING TO THE WORD

Share with the person next to you one way you can act on this week's readings. Suggestions: Get rid of all 'weapons of war' that hinder you from getting closer to Jesus and his ways e.g., jealousy, negative words and deeds. Fight with prayer—maybe with fasting and your own determination—one work of darkness that is operative in your life. Decide on one way you are going to include the poor in your Christmas budget.

**JOURNALING.** *Having listened to God's Word and listened 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.*

### PRAYING WITH THE WORD

**FACILITATOR:** Let us now pause to see how something(s) said in the reading might lead us into shared prayer. Suggestion: "*Jesus, help me to grow in vigilance for your presence in the events and encounters of our daily lives.*"

### 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)

*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.*

### Note to small groups outside Ascension parish

Since I assume, my parishioners at Ascension in Melbourne know the following, I am addressing this note to small groups outside Ascension. I urge our people to give others a spiritual gift for Christmas. One way to give people a \$3 spiritual gift is by giving them a copy of my book ***13 Powerful Ways to Pray***. If you buy 6 or more copies, you can get them for \$3 each (shipping included) at [Dynamiccatholic.com](http://Dynamiccatholic.com) or call 513-221-7700.

Concerning this book, Bert Ghezzi writes: "*Three words describe this book best – it is practical, practical and practical.*" At the end of each chapter are questions for personal and small group discussion. Many pastors have gotten 500 or 1,000 for parishioners (\$2 each).

In October, a new book of mine was published. It is called: ***A Simple Explanation of The Mass – A Step by Step Commentary on the Mass and the Liturgical Year***. This book comes in hardcover and costs \$20. Copies are available at our Parish Office for the author's discount price of \$8.

**SCC Annual Day of Reflection: We Are Mission!**

**January 25, 2020, 8:00am – 3:00pm**

**Presented by**

**Fr. Blake Britton & Dr. Carol Razza**

**St. John the Evangelist Parish, Viera, FL**

**Info and \$12 Tickets at [sccspacecoast@gmail.com](mailto:sccspacecoast@gmail.com)**

**A Blessed Advent Season**

**Fr. Eamon Tobin – [tobin2@live.com](mailto:tobin2@live.com)**