

St. Francis of Assisi Old Catholic Church

Advent/Christmas

December, 2018



We are a Christ-centered faith community formed to worship God where all are invited. We are welcoming, loving one another by embracing diversity, fostering spiritual growth and hope, living the gospel in the world, and recognizing the God who lives in all.

A different way to be Catholic.

Events

Things are happening in our community. Our church is alive and active. Come, participate and enjoy fellowship with your church community and your greater community.



We meet at 6:00 pm at the church and, following our scripture study, adjourn to a nearby restaurant to share a meal.

Won't you join us?



Women's Spirituality Group

The entire Faith Community is invited to join this group for sharing our stories of struggle and joy in our faith journeys.

Meetings rotate among members' homes and conclude with a potluck dinner.

Interfaith Ministry Opportunities

Laundry love: December 18

4-6 or 6-8pm
Booms Laundry
250 Elm St.
Biddeford

Senior Lunch: December 18

10:45 – 12:00
St. David's Church
Kennebunk

Outreach

Shelter Ministries

There is a continuing need for diapers for the York County Homeless Shelter. We have made a commitment to help fulfill this need and continue to do so. In November we donated **64 diapers**.

There is also a dire need for Friskies poultry flavored canned cat food at the Safe Haven animal shelter which is also a recipient of our outreach. In November we donated **86 cans of cat food and 3 lbs. of dry food**.



BLESSING BAGS

As part of our ongoing outreach to the greater community, we are handing out "blessing bags" (filled with several essentials for an individual on the street) to those who need them.

Please consider becoming a part of this ministry and carry a blessing bag in your car..



Donate Bottles and Cans

Thank you to all in the community who collect returnable bottles and cans for our CLYNK campaign. The money collected goes to the Wells Fuel Fund for those who need help during our cold winters.

So far this year we have collected

\$115.25

Calendar

Mass:

Every Sunday – 9:00 a.m.

952 Post Road (Route 1)
Colonial Square
Wells, ME



Saturday, December 1

Craft Fair 10am Wells Middle School Route 1

Thursday, Dec. 6

Parish Council workshop 6:30

Saturday, Dec. 15

Advent retreat 10am-1pm

Thursday, Dec. 13

Bible Study 6pm



Sunday, Dec. 16

Parish Council meeting after fellowship

Monday, Dec. 24

Christmas Eve Mass 4 pm

Thursday, Dec. 27

Bible Study 6pm



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Lectionary Reading for December

Changing Direction to Follow the Path of God

By Roger Karban

The biblical authors of this month's liturgies can identify with [a necessitated] change in direction. If their own discipleship had given them a direct path in carrying out God's plan, they probably would never have written the readings on which we are reflecting. For most, the turnabout they experienced prompted the passages we have been given.

Jeremiah's pericope on the First Sunday of Advent is one of the exceptions. At this point in his ministry, the prophet still believes Yahweh will rectify the abuses he has encountered in the "normal" way: through the Davidic leadership. When the right king sits on the throne, things will change for the better.

Paul, on the other hand, has experienced a 180-degree directional change. He writes 1 Thessalonians — the oldest Christian writing we possess — for Gentiles, not for the Jews he originally presumed he would be evangelizing. Instead of first converting all Jews, then starting on Gentiles, he has reversed the process. In his revised plan, once Gentiles are turned into other Christians, jealousy will prompt Jews to follow suit.

In a similar turnabout, Luke seems to be the first Christian writer to abandon the general belief that the risen Jesus will return in his lifetime. He is convinced this Parousia will eventually happen, but it is going to take place while he is already enjoying heaven with the Christ, not before. That's why — writing in the mid-80s C.E. — he is so insistent that his readers stay "vigilant." That unique event is still going to happen, even if it is not following its original schedule. In situations like this, one can only join the psalmist in praying, "Teach me your paths." They are certainly not the paths God's chosen people originally started down.

As we know from the Second Sunday of Advent, Paul is confident that in spite of all the change in directions, "the one who began a good work in you will continue to complete it until the day of Christ." It is understandable that Baruch encourages his people to look forward to people returning to Jerusalem after the sixth century B.C.E. Babylonian exile, but it is important to remember what Deutero-Isaiah discovered: Most Israelites refused to accept that a non-Jew — Cyrus — would be the "new Moses" who would actually bring about that return.

On the Third Sunday of Advent. Our sacred authors could not speak in more idealistic terms of Yahweh, or the risen Jesus working in our lives. Zephaniah, for instance has confidence that the seventh century B.C.E. reforming King Josiah will restore Yahweh to the majestic place he/she deserves, actually causing

God to "sing joyfully ... as one sings at festivals." Isaiah, the composer of today's psalm agrees. Since Yahweh is on our side, we have nothing to fear. Paul believes the risen Jesus now fulfills that role in our lives. We only must "make your requests known to God" through Christ and we will "have no anxiety at all." Beautifully and optimistically said.

But then, John the Baptizer comes on the scene. When asked, "What should we do?" he leaves the idealistic language behind, simply saying, "Share your cloaks and your food. Stop cheating and extorting. Don't lie and be satisfied with your wages." Unless we first change our basic direction in life, there is no sense worrying about what God can achieve through us. The best might still be to come, but we will only be part of it after we clean our hands.

Yet as the Fourth Sunday of Advent teaches us, we will also be part of it only after we change to another direction in life: from big to small.

When God gets down to the nitty-gritty, he/she works through the most insignificant people around. Micah, for instance, reminds us that the family of David, which will eventually "save" the chosen people, had its start in the village of Bethlehem — not the town we would expect to find on a messiah's resume.

Elizabeth, the Baptizer's mother, wants to know why Mary is visiting her, and not hobnobbing with some high muckety-mucks. The only thing she and her relative have going for them is that they believe God can personally work through their lives, as insignificant as they are.

The author of Hebrews joins in their amazement, applying the same standard to Jesus. He is not known for his good looks or superior mind. The one thing all his followers can imitate is his determination to do God's will, no matter where that will take us, or no matter how often it changes direction.

We hear the readings of the Christmas Mass during the Night so often they have lost much of their original "sting." When Isaiah, for instance, first proclaimed the early eighth century B.C.E. birth (or coronation) of King Hezekiah, he was talking to a people who for a generation had been forced by his father Ahaz to practice a pagan riddled faith, going so far as even sacrificing their sons to the local fertility gods. The prophet was confident this boy — consumed with the zeal of Yahweh — would bring a total turnabout.

In the same way, just as those who had experienced Hezekiah, so those who experienced Jesus would never be the same again. Everything has changed. Though we wax poetic over angelic interventions, remember how our sacred authors employ these otherworldly messengers: scholars contend they are simply literary devices who interpret events for their readers. We are to take their message, not themselves, literally. In this situation, this humbly born child is gifted to us by God in order to bring peace into our lives. But as the author of the Letter to Titus reminds us, the peace for which we long isn't going to happen automatically. Before this golden age, we are obligated "to live temperately, justly and devoutly." Lawlessness does not disappear on its own. No wonder the responsorial psalm on this night talks about singing a "new song." If we insist on revolving our celebration around the usual schmaltzy, comforting feelings "of the season," peace will never be ours. Only when we change will our world change.

The next feast is that of the Holy Family. Luke, at this point in his Gospel, is employing a source that knows nothing about annunciations to Mary and Joseph. Jesus' parents are constantly learning who their son is. They have received no special, angelic information about his personality. Though I presume they had troubling questions about his conception, on many other levels they are just like us. They aren't "faking it" for the Bible's sake.

Good families only "happen" when all family members are adaptable. Unless we are willing to constantly change direction in life, we will never be able to figure out the will of God for our families or for the world.

It reinforces my belief that Christianity should make the cockroach its "totem insect." No living critter has evolved more over the millions of years it has existed. Only its ability to change and adapt keeps it alive.

Can the same be said of us and our faith?

Adapted from *Celebration*, December, 2018

ALL ABOUT ADVENT

The weeks leading up to Christmas are filled with holiday songs, seasonal sales, decorations, lights, and sometimes Advent wreaths and candles. Why? What is it that we're celebrating? What is Advent?

About Advent

Each year the Catholic Church gives us an incredible opportunity for a powerful encounter with Jesus. In her genius, the Church invites us during Advent to take a step back and look at who we are, what we are doing, and where Jesus fits into our lives.

Jesus came into this world at that first Christmas for you, to bring meaning and deep satisfaction into your life, to fill you with lasting joy, and ultimately to bring you to eternal happiness with him in heaven. That's what we celebrate at Christmas. Are you ready?

When Does Advent Begin?

Advent officially begins four Sundays before Christmas and ends on December 24. It marks the beginning of the Catholic Church's calendar year. Advent starts on December 2, 2018.

We have a shorter Advent this year (only twenty-two days long!). Christmas Eve is the Fourth Monday of Advent, with Christmas falling on Tuesday. 4 weeks isn't long, but that still leaves plenty of time to spend some quiet time preparing for Jesus' coming. Common Advent traditions include an Advent calendar, the Advent wreath, and special Advent prayers.

What Is an Advent Wreath?

During Advent and Christmas, festively decorated evergreen wreaths hang in windows and on doors everywhere. In many homes and churches, it's also common to see special wreaths lying on tables or ledges, adorned with four candles (usually three purple and one pink). This familiar symbol of the season is the Advent wreath.

Traditionally, the Advent wreath is a circle of evergreen branches. Both the evergreen branches and the circular shape symbolize the passing of time and eternal life. The shape of the wreath, with no beginning or end,

reflects the complete and endless love that Jesus has for us. During the Advent season, we eagerly anticipate his coming and the promise of eternal life in heaven with him.

The Meaning of Advent Candles

As a Christian tradition, the wreath holds the four Advent candles. The candles represent Jesus coming as the light in darkness. One candle is lit each Sunday until all four candles are lit, and sometimes a fifth candle is lit on Christmas. As Christmas draws nearer, each candle brings a little more light into the darkness.

Each of the candles represents an aspect of preparation during the season of Advent:

1. The Candle of Hope *Color: Purple*
Purple is the primary color associated with Advent. Within the Catholic Church it symbolizes penance, preparation, and sacrifice. During the first week of Advent, we look forward to Jesus' coming with hope.
2. The Candle of Peace *Color: Purple*
During this second week of Advent, we reflect on our lives and work on becoming better-versions-of-ourselves in preparation for Jesus' coming.
3. The Candle of Joy *Color: Pink*
This third candle is pink, symbolizing anticipation and rejoicing. During the third week of Advent, we are filled with joy for the near arrival of Jesus on Christmas day.
4. The Candle of Love *Color: Purple*
During this final week of Advent we rejoice in the endless love that God has for us, which is made apparent in the birth of his Son:

How to Prepare for Christmas

Think about it this way. We prepare for everything we consider important in life. You wouldn't show up to play in a football game and expect to win if you had not been training. You wouldn't show up unprepared to give a big presentation at work and expect to get the project. We don't expect to excel in exams if we have not studied. Consider the preparation that goes into hosting a barbecue, a dinner party, or a wedding.

Now I don't mean the typical Christmas preparations. Buying and wrapping presents. Baking cookies. Planning parties. Putting up the lights, the tree, and other decorations. I mean preparing you. When was the last time you prepared your heart for Jesus' coming at Christmas?

Looking for a simple way to start preparing your heart to receive the Jesus, this Christmas season?

We prepare for everything we consider important in life. In every case preparation makes a wonderful experience possible. When was the last time you prepared your heart for Christmas?



**May the hope, peace, joy and love of
Advent**

fill your Christmas

with all the blessings of

the Incarnate One.



Spotlight!

Advent Retreat “Experiencing the Wait with All of Our Senses.”

December 15
10 am – 2 pm

While we are all aware of the chronological sense of time as we wait for the birth of the Christ Child, we want to focus on our other senses—hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting and feeling—during this holy season. When Mary said “Yes!” to the angel, she gave her entire self to God’s will. Embracing a very definite Marian emphasis, we will focus on how our own “whole self” might prepare for the Incarnation.

With music, *lectio divina*, meditation, writing, and food we will celebrate this period of waiting and preparation by using all of our senses to strengthen our connection with Mary, the Mother of God.



Meditation/Prayer

For December...

Let us pray. O God, who made this most holy night to shine forth with the brightness of the true Light, grant we beseech Thee, that we who have known the mystery of His light on earth, may attain the enjoyment of His happiness in heaven. Who lives and reigns with Thee forever and ever. AMEN.

*God of love and mercy,
in this season of Christmas
we offer you our thanks and praise.*

*We want to spread the word of peace
you give us through Jesus Christ.*

*May the birth of your Son overcome
human suffering, calm our fears,
and bring peace to our homes,
our families and the world.*

Amen

Parish Council

President:	Debbie Gaudreau
Vice-Moderator:	vacant
Treasurer:	Dawn Saporito
Secretary:	Carol Olmstead
Members-at-large:	Janet O'Day Pat Emery Maryann Stacy

The Most Reverend Dr. Rosemary Ananis, Pastor

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