



THE BETHLEHEM

Hebrew for "House of Bread"

Winter/Advent/Christmas, 2024 Edition

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The Seasons of Arrival and Incarnation For Us!



How fitting it is that we start the Season of Advent at the end of our Thanksgiving weekend. We have learned that to practice gratitude involves daily reflection on the blessings and the crosses of each day and bringing them to Christ with a *thanksgiving* heart. It's the understanding of giving thanks in all circumstances. This attitude of gratitude, even during predictable or unpredictable times of adversity, breaks through the darkness and calamity and opens the door into the light of hope and peace.

Advent is a time of the year to rekindle the light of Christ that is within us by taking inventory of our lives and to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, both our Lord's humble birth in the manger over 2000 years ago and His Second Coming in the future. During this penitential season, it is a time for our souls to also magnify the Lord and to be God's instruments of Hope, Peace, Joy and Love.

Advent is about the reordering of Creation. There are major changes that are taking shape in our lives that can also make room for the Christ to enter our existence and provide for us everything that is listed above and more. Along with lighting the candles of an Advent wreath, our illumination becomes clear as we also focus on our Scripture lessons during Advent. The prophetic and rejuvenating messages of a new world order will bring us new opportunities, new visions, new directions and new lives.

Christmas is where Incarnation comes into play on our current earthly pilgrimage. While Incarnation is an understanding that God took human form in Jesus the Christ, the immanence of Christ in our world also demonstrates that God can be *innate* within our lives today through the power of the Holy Spirit within us. Like the Song of Mary, if God is *indwelling* within us, then we can also put our thoughts, words and deeds into a "magnifying our Lord" process. Through such a sacred calling, as Jesus said we have, we become the Light of the World and let that light so shine!

This is why we start with Advent, to repent. With penitent hearts, we clear our minds and ask God to cast out anything that is not of Christ. We turn away from negative involvement, and instead turn towards God and be injected with the attitudes and actions of the realm of heaven. The root meaning of “to repent” is “to turn” or to have a dramatic change of mind and direction. To repent is to turn away from the old self and become a new creation in Christ.

So, in this time of Advent and Christmas, let us also become the unexpected Gift with all those we are in contact with, and begin anew with a change of heart, making room for God’s calling: a change of direction, a change of purpose, a change to live an abundant life and serve others. Through such a holy transformation, we discover the divine in us all.

Let Advent and Christmas allow Christ to reside within, through the abiding grace and love of our Lord Jesus Christ. A blessed Advent and Holy Christmas to you, all.

Fr. Barrett+

Blessing of the Animals in the Fall



St. Francis would have been pleased as we had an estimated of 30+ animals, including pictures and stuffed animals that were brought to be blessed by our clergy. The children of

our parish were present too, being a part of the asperging with holy water on each pet brought up to the chancel area. We give thanks to God for the joyful service that touched all of our hearts, especially us animal lovers.

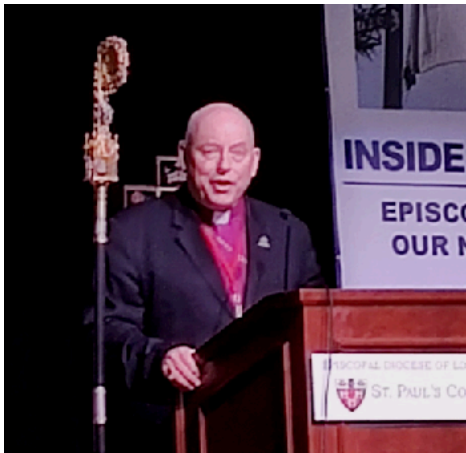


What a great day it was with our sanctuary filled with all God's Creation. Not only the humans were worshipping, but every one of the pets that were with us were almost completely quiet and still in the pews with their owners, especially during the sermon and Holy Eucharist.

129th Annual Diocesan Convention at Riverside Convention Center

“Baptized by Ballots, pummeled by pundits...here are we of the huddled remnant, about to take our treacherous boat ride across the Sea of Galilee.”

Thus did Bishop John Taylor welcome clergy, delegates, and guests to the 129th Annual Diocesan Convention, as we gathered just a few days after election day. Much of the weekend was spent on how best to respond to the election results, through straight talk about outrage and fear along with clarion calls to protect the vulnerable among us likely to be impacted by the incoming U.S. President. The Convention was held November 8 & 9 at the Riverside Conference Center.



Blessed Sacrament was represented by Clergy Fr. Barrett and Deacon Dominique along with lay delegate Aimee Aul, alternate Ashley Mangino, and youth delegate Matthew Stevens. The theme for this year's convention *Inside Out: Episcopal Identity in our Neighborhoods* spotlighting the outreach work of the people of the diocese. The 50th anniversary of the ordination of women to the priesthood was also celebrated. Liturgical language in worship emphasized the maternal face of God, and readings from the Book of Wisdom reminded us of the historic role of the divine feminine in our faith tradition. Special guest Rev. Dr. Carter Heyward, one of the original



“Philadelphia 11” ordained in 1974, gave the keynote address, which further underscored the theme of the power of women. Dr. Heyward drew heavily on her latest book “The Seven Deadly Sins of Christian Nationalism” in decrying the complicity of mainstream churches by “keeping above politics” during the rise of the religious right. “We are wrestling with two questions,” Dr. Heyward said, “How do we work our way through the hatred, and secondly, what does it mean to be religious leaders in the face of Authoritarianism?” Unsurprisingly, the answer is love. “My call is to stay alert” Heyward advised. “Look for opportunities to love our way through the hate.”

It wasn't all sturm und drang. There were boring votes to be made to fill elective offices. Joyful moments included welcoming the congregation of St. Andrew's Irvine as an incorporated parish congregation in the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, and a celebratory procession of all female

clergy for Saturday Eucharist. Resplendent in Martyr's red, the female clergy of the diocese, including our own Rev. Deacon Dominique encapsulated the present and future of our vibrant faith.

All Saints November 3, 2024- We Remember



Procession starts with full incense being dispensed, one of the few times we do this. Table up front has pictures and candles ready for tributes, blessings and the reading of the Necrology- listing the dear departed.



Carol does the readings showing the posted calendar, Dcn Dominique reads the Gospel after incense and Fr. Barrett delivers his sermon outlining the ideas behind this day. The reading of the Necrology begins after the sermon.



During the reading of the Necrology, Fr. Barrett blesses each picture on the table then lights candles and prays at the small altar and then Dcn Dominique lights a candle and prays there also.



The Congregation was actively involved in the liturgy, singing, praying and remembering those believers in Christ that have gone before us by walking up to light the votive candles and kneel while listening to the necrology and the sacred music in the background. It is a celebration of the eternal life and witness of those we love and cherish; It is a high holy feast that connects us within the thin space between heaven and earth, recognizing the Communion of all Saints. Special blessings were also given to Ashley and Carol as well as Holy Communion being received.



Due to our parish hall now being a designated polling place, our coffee hour was moved outside with early voting in progress with Election Day in 3 days! Your editor left for Chile the next day.



Advent

Hope



S



Oblations and offerings borne by (Left to right, front first: Anna and Rose followed by Tom and Mueni.

The Season of Advent begins our new Church year with the first candle of Hope on our Advent wreath being lit. The color of Marian Blue is adorned throughout the sanctuary to recognize the new season as a time of preparation and anticipation for the arrival of the Light of Christ-- inside OUT. On this special day, our clergy also shared a special thank you to an anonymous family donation of the new Rose vestments that will be a part of Gaudete Sunday (Rejoice). Along with blessing the new vestments, Matthew and Dcn. Dominique also received birthday blessings and anointing.



After the service, a delicious reception to start our new Church year was done in our Parish Hall and the Hospitality group share a moment before starting cleanup. Well done to all!



Peace



On our second Sunday of Advent, we reflect on the candle of Peace being lit and prepare our hearts for the peace of God in our hearts that surpasses all understanding. Our sacred music was offered by Aimee and Roxanne with their beautiful duets with flute and harp. The Lee family also were involved in our Mass with Marion and Matthew as Oblation Bearers and Doug as our Eucharistic Minister. The blue vestments continue to emphasize the season of preparation for us all.



Communion in the pews and up front for our two musicians with nice view of the new blue vestments..a nice combo!



Meanwhile, in Scully Hall awaiting.....

Lunch with Santa Angelina!



A good time was had by all. There were about 24 residents and families attending and the food was awesome with plenty left over for carry out. A really generous lunch with turkey and all the trimmings, ham, sweet potatoes, Mac and cheese and lots of salad and desert to boot! Salutes to the kitchen crew and others that helped put this together! Special thanks to Aimee Aul's leadership & team for making this luncheon possible.

Joy



The Rose Candle of Joy is lit for the third week of Advent and with clergy now in their new Rose vestments, as previewed on the First Sunday, demonstrates this joyous day the joy of sharing Communion at the Altar rail and in the pews.



After the sermon, many announcements and the last one a reminder of the upcoming Lessons & Carols that evening by director Brigitte Bellavione.



The end of the Recessional and Dismissal and a final wave to the Zoom camera for our virtual guests. Thanks be to God!, Fellowship and refreshments in Scully Hall set up by our fabulous Hosting Group.



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The Winter Solstice: 21December2024 at 0924:20:00UT/0124:20:00PST

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