

Advent Reflection (continued from front page)

Using Isaiah's words, John first speaks in imperatives: prepare and make straight the way. But then the verbs shift to the passive voice, implying that it will be the Coming One himself who will do the filling in of the valleys and levelling of the mountains, straightening out winding roads, and smoothing the rough ways. The Coming One does not eliminate the suffering and sorrow along life's path, but fills us with saving joy, justice, forgiveness, and mercy as we open ourselves to the great things God has done and continues to do for us.

Barbara E. Reid, OP,

Advent Wreath

Second Sunday of Advent: The second candle of Advent is the Candle of Hope. It is sometimes called the Bethlehem Candle to remind us of the place in which preparations were made to receive and cradle the Christ child. Hope is a gift that we must be prepared for. God gives us the gift of hope when we turn to him in faith.

All make the Sign of the Cross +

A member of the family lights the 1st and 2nd purple candle.

Blessing: Loving God, on this Advent night we turn to you in prayer. As we wait for the coming of your Son, we ask you to bless our family. Comfort us with your healing and help us to welcome your light into our lives, a light that gives us the gift of peace.

May your peace guard our hearts, our minds and our home. We ask this through Christ our Lord. R. Amen. **Together we say:** *Come Lord Jesus.*

All make the Sign of the Cross +

The two candles are allowed to burn during the evening meals of the 2nd week.

Gospel Luke 3:1-6

The call of John the Baptist

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness.

He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight.

Every valley will be filled in,
every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened
and rough roads made smooth.

And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.



Advent Reflection

In some cultures, a woman who has been widowed or who loses a child wears black for a year to signal her mourning. Her face too wears the marks of grief. The sparkle in her eyes gives way to ready tears and her step becomes heavy from sorrow. Such is the image of the city of Jerusalem in today's first reading.

Baruch characterises the devastated city as a woman in mourning for her exiled children who have been forcibly taken away from her by the Babylonians. The prophet declares that it is time for Jerusalem to exchange her robe of mourning and misery for a brilliant new mantle. Her new cloak is spun from justice and glory from God. If she despaired for her children, thinking God had forgotten them, the prophet insists that "they are remembered by God" (Bar. 5:5).

The humiliation of their forced march into exile on foot will be undone by their being carried back aloft, as if they were royalty. The heights of despair and the depths of depression will be levelled out. It is not that the suffering is forgotten, or that anything could go back to being the way it was before the tragedy, but now the divine gift of joy settles over the grieving mother as rebuilding life out of the ruins begins. The returnees are led by God's light, and their companions are mercy and justice.

This time of pandemic has felt like a kind of exile for us, too, hasn't it? On top of that, migrants and refugees at borders, and victims of violence in our towns and cities are all struggling to rebuild life out of the ruins. Like Jerusalem in Baruch's time, there is no going back to what was before, but we let God's motherly care enfold us with mercy and justice as our companions. With them we can move toward healing, restoration, and the chance for a new beginning.

In the gospel, John the Baptist also announces a chance for a new beginning. The narrative starts on an ominous note, reminding us of the power that Pontius Pilate, Herod, Annas, and Caiaphas hold. We already know the end of the story. And so it is with some urgency we hear John's invitation to repent: to turn away from personal choices that impede God's coming and collectively turn toward divine mercy.

(continued on back page)

Monday, 6th December. St Nicholas
 8.00am: Bridget Ward (A) 10.00am: Joe Mimmagh and DFM

Tuesday, 7th December. St Ambrose
 8.00am: Special Intention
 10.00am: Patrick, Julia and Peter Rodgers & DFM

Wednesday, 8th December. Immaculate Conception of the BVM
 6.00pm (Vigil): May Stokes (Month's Mind)
 7.30pm (Vigil): May and Bob Phipps & DFM
 8.00am: Thomas Gray (A)
 10.00am: Tony and Mai Vaughan and their daughter Veronica (A)
 1.00pm: Edward (Ned) Duggan and deceased family members
 6.00pm: Mary Savage and deceased family members

Thursday, 9th December. St Juan Diego Cuahtlatotzin
 8.00am: Michael Nevin (A)
 10.00am: Thomas Doyle (A)

Friday, 10th December. UN Human Rights Day
 8.00am: Teresa Keenan (A)
 10.00am: Hannah Keegan (A)

Saturday, 11th December. St Damasus 1, Pope
 8.00am: Christina Kiernan (100th Birthday Remembrance)
 10.00am: Maurice McManus (A)

Sunday, 12th December. Third Sunday of Advent
 6.00pm (Vigil): Bridget West (A)
 7.30pm (Vigil): Mel Murtagh (A)
 8.00am: Brean Donnelly (A)
 10.00am: Patricia and Frank Meally (A)
 11.30am: Shared: Paddy, Una, Pdraig and Marie Connellan
 Mary Lizzie McCoppin (A)
 1.00pm: Thomas Rodgers (A) 6.00pm: Michael Kilemade (A)

OFFERTORY COLLECTION: We thank each one of you most sincerely for your continued generous contributions to our weekly collections. The amount received in the Offertory Collection last weekend was €3,445.00.

RECENTLY DECEASED: Your prayers are requested for the happy repose of the soul of Frank O'Reilly, Knockloughlin, whose funeral took place during the week.

BAPTISM: With joy, we recently welcomed Sonny Jim O'Donnell, Loui Brendan Kelly and Caragh Noelle Trappe into the Christian Community.

LONGFORD COUNTY CHOIR ANNUAL CHRISTMAS CONCERT will be held on Sunday 19th Dec at 7.30pm. Admission is free and tickets are available on www.eventbrite.ie

CATHEDRAL CIRCLE IS BACK !! Weekly draws will recommence **this Monday 6th Dec.** Lines are €1 and are available from your local promoters, including Farrell Coy, Baxters Totalhealth Pharmacy, Elegant Interiors, Pdraig Loughrey, Doyle's Shop, Clarke's Bar, Donlons Newsagency - Dublin St., Drumlish P.O., Patricia Ryan, Eric Trappe, Joe Lyons, Peter O'Brien, Christy Monaghan, Gala - Dublin Road, Larry Foudy, Mary Creevy, Breege Savage, Helen Leavy, Josephine Reilly, Annette Lally and Liz Oates.

PARISH REGISTRATION: We are currently updating our census in the Parish office. We would like to have every household registered and to ensure that each home receives their box of envelopes. If you are not registered or are unsure, please contact the Parish office at 043-3346465 or email: stmelscathedral@gmail.com

ST. VINCENT DE PAUL ANNUAL APPEAL "Impossible Choices" has been chosen to reflect what those struggling financially face every day. If you would like to make a donation there are envelopes available in the porch of the Cathedral or you can place a donation in an ordinary envelope marked St Vincent de Paul and leave it in the Presbytery. This year the local VdeP have a "gift card" in lieu of presents that you can send to a loved one. You can get a "gift card" (or cards) by making a donation to VdeP. This can be passed on to a loved one instead of buying a present. The gift card can be obtained from any committee member or from the presbytery.

COUNTY LONGFORD SOCIAL SERVICES CLG church gate collection for County Longford Social Services will be held next weekend 11th and 12th December.

BOX OF PARISH ENVELOPES 2022: Parish envelopes are now available for distribution. The envelope is a vital source of income for the parish and has been a great source of support to the priests and the parish especially during these Covid times. We need volunteers to distribute boxes in many areas of the parish, and if you can help, even with a small number of boxes, please call to the sacristy or the parish office. Sincere thanks to all who helped in the past.

SHOP LOCAL IN LONGFORD THIS CHRISTMAS: Now more than ever, it's time to support your local businesses. Support your community, support your town.