

in focus

708 West Main Street

Urbana, Illinois

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The RCIA Moves Into Advent

The inquiry sessions on Catholicism, the first phase of the process called the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, opened in October with informative presentations about God, Jesus, the Church, the sacraments, Mary, and Scripture. The men and women attending these sessions have been sincerely seeking, searching, and questioning as they explore their own relationships with the Lord in their journey of faith.

For those who desire to enter into full communion with the Catholic Church, the time has now come to move into the next phase of the RCIA process, the catechumenate. In Advent, the faith community that is St. Patrick's Parish welcomes each of these inquirers into the "Order of Catechumens." As catechumens, they become a part of the Church (and our church) in a very real, though not yet complete, sense.

The focus of the weekly sessions shifts from informational presentations to a breaking open of Scripture, the Word of the Lord that is proclaimed in our Sunday liturgies. Once again the catechumens become a visible presence in our community — almost ironically, as they are sent forth from our midst after the homily to continue their reflection on those readings and to share awareness of the action of the Lord in their lives recalled by the readings.

This is a time when sponsors from the parish join the catechumens to model and share their own faith. The prayers of the entire parish are their support and Scripture their nourishment in a special way during this time in their journey with the Lord.



Our Pastor Shares Reflections On . . . Advent Spirituality

It has become commonplace to speak about the seasons of a person's life as well as the seasons of the year or the seasons of the liturgical cycle. But have you thought about the seasons of the spiritual life?

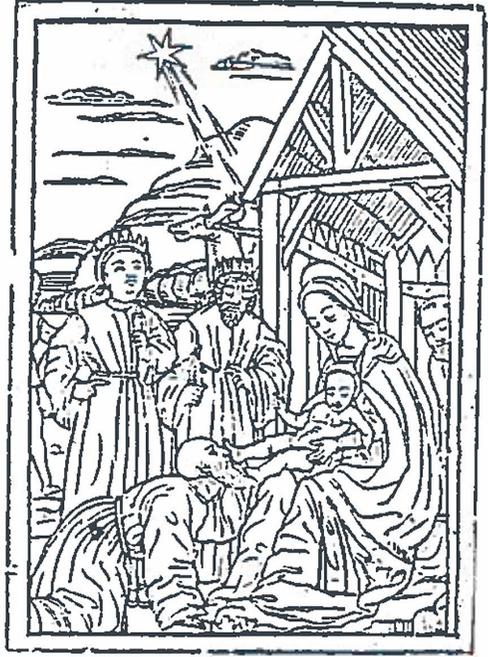
Conception, birth, growth, decline, renewal, sickness, healing, dying — these are only some of the stages or seasons that mark the passage of both physical and spiritual life. Life of either kind is never a static existence, nor can it be experienced all at once, but only in those discrete moments when some season predominates.

As a season of the liturgical year, Advent is characterized as a time of waiting, expectation, and preparation for the coming of the Lord. Since the liturgy should give direction and form to the spirituality of individuals as well as of the community, it invites us to enter into the attitudes and prayer of patient waiting, expectation, and preparation.

Patient waiting is hardly natural to Americans. We rush to do our Christmas shopping. We hurry to clean the house. We dash to Mass. Just to quiet ourselves and be receptive to God's gentle arrival requires a change of pace for most of us.

Mary, as the receptive vessel of God's dwelling among us, as the pregnant mother waiting for the birth of her child, is a model for Advent spirituality. During Advent, treasure moments of waiting as a time for prayer rather than for frustration. Waiting at a stop sign, waiting for a friend, waiting for a call, waiting for a ride — all provide an opportunity to tune in to God rather than to the radio or TV. Accept the time and the silence as a gift that invites you to be united to the God who wants to come into your life.

Perhaps many of us have stopped praying because we really don't expect God to reveal his presence to us. That attitude, a self-fulfilling prophecy, must change for his pres-



tion the Advent liturgy gives us St. John the Baptist. This forerunner of Christ, himself mistaken for the Messiah by many, made ready the way of the Lord — and Jesus came to him at the River Jordan. In that moment of encounter, the voice of the Father and the power of the Holy Spirit were revealed to John. Advent spirituality waits expectantly.

In Mary and in John the Baptist, waiting and expectation were not merely passive characteristics but a positive making ready for the advent of Jesus. They lived out what the prophet Isaiah, a third Advent figure, announced long ago, "make ready the way of the Lord."

Be quiet, be expectant, be ready. He

St. Patrick's Parish Is Alive And Well In St. Joseph

For several years members of St. Patrick's Parish have been a visible Catholic presence in the St. Joseph-Ogden area. Over 100 of St. Patrick's 1100 families live in St. Joseph.

On the fourth Saturday of each month, these members of our parish gather to celebrate Mass at 7:00 p.m. in the Methodist Church in St. Joseph. On Wednesdays at 6:45 p.m. the youth gather for religious-education classes, from pre-school through junior high school, at St. Joseph's Public Elementary School.

Many generous individuals are responsible for the growth, development, and stability of the Catholic community in St. Joseph and their religious-education programs. Currently 10 catechists are serving about 60 students in the programs. Colette McMullen is coordinator of the religious-education programs there this year. She and her husband, Mike, are the parents of three daughters, who are 10 months, 2 years, and 5 years of age. Colette has taught in the St. Joseph religious-education programs for a number of years before becoming coordinator this year. She is very pleased with the dedication and cooperation of the many parishioners in the St. Joseph-Ogden area who help to make the Catholic presence there a visible and viable reality.



Families Celebrate Reconciliation Together

This year St. Patrick's Parish will celebrate a family liturgy of reconciliation in addition to the traditional Advent communal reconciliation. This liturgy will bring families together as a unit to celebrate God's gifts of love, forgiveness, and healing. Children, young people, and adults can worship together in a way that is meaningful to them. All families are invited to participate in this service on Tuesday, December 9, at 7:00 p.m., to be reconciled in love with our families, our community, and our God.



Colette McMullen

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, And Ransom Captive Israel

The Advent season anticipates the coming of the loving, forgiving Jesus, who comes again and again through the sacrament of Reconciliation to heal, to encourage, and to guide. In our communal celebration of this sacrament we are invited to recognize the individual and collective distance we have put between ourselves and God, to encounter the compassionate, grace-filled Jesus, and to ask and receive his forgiveness. Together we make visible the triumph of good over evil in each of us, in St. Patrick's community, and in the Church — through Jesus, who ransoms us.

* * *

The communal reconciliation service traditionally held in the three Catholic parishes in our area during Advent will take place this year on December 15 at St. Matthew's, on December 16 at St. Patrick's, and on December 17 at Holy Cross. Watch the bulletin for a reminder of times and places.



Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus!

During Advent the Church the world over cries out in many tongues "Maranatha!" — "Come, Lord Jesus!" — in heightened awareness of Christ's coming into our own lives and into the life of our community. Advent is a time for getting in touch with the ways in which the Lord has already acted and continues to act in our lives — strengthening, encouraging, consoling, and challenging. It is a time for gathering with others of our faith community to recall and to share our experiences of the Lord.

In order to prepare ourselves the better to hear God's word, proclaim it, and respond

to it, opportunities for reflection and sharing of insights on the Sunday readings will be provided in December — on the first two Sundays (8:30-10:00 a.m.) and the first two Thursdays (7:00-8:30 p.m.), in the Parish Center lounge. Background and contextual information on the Scripture readings will be provided by Carolyn McElrath, who has been pursuing graduate study in Scripture through the Diocese of Peoria in cooperation with Mundelein College. All adults of high-school age or older are both welcome and invited to participate in these sessions.

“Our Prayers Rise Like Incense . . .”

December is typically filled with preparations for Christmas celebrations with family, friends, co-workers. Yet December is also a time for reflection in quiet expectation of the Christmas mysteries.

To give such reflection time and space in the midst of the pre-Christmas bustle and hustle, a simple Evening Prayer service will be offered at St. Patrick's during the weekdays of Advent.

You are invited to step aside for a few moments into a time and space for prayer that expresses the hope of a promise fulfilled and yet to be fulfilled, the coming of the Lord. On weekdays (excepting Fridays), December 1-23, at 6:45 p.m. in the multipurpose room, Parish Center.



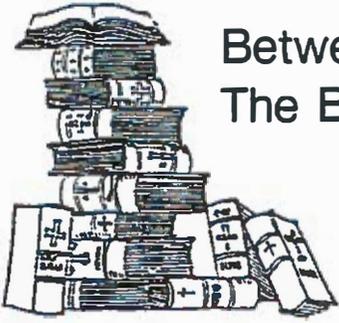
Barter, Not Budget — Or, Are You Somebody Too?

Have you ever wanted to give more to the parish than your budget would allow? If so, you might consider giving some of your time. The jobs listed below are looking for doers. In general, these jobs can be done at any time and at your own pace. If you are interested, please call the parish office (367-2665), leave your name and telephone number, and state the type of help you can offer. Someone from the Building and Grounds Committee will return your call.

1. Repair the church kneelers, west side
2. Tuckpoint the church exterior (requires experience)
3. Caulk windows, etc., in the church and the Parish Center
4. Wash walls in the Parish Center
5. Clean out the church basement and put up shelves
6. Wash church pews
7. Wash tables
8. Clean out and organize the garage
9. Shovel snow
10. Install janitor's sink in the Parish Center basement
11. Install new fire alarm and public address systems (requires experience)
12. Paint exterior trim (in the spring)

Are you skilled in such areas as heating, air conditioning, plumbing, electrical work, pruning, gardening, sewing, carpentry, upholstery, or in any other area that you can put to the service of the parish? Please call the parish office and leave that information for reference as needs arise.

I wondered why somebody didn't do some



Between The Bookends

The word "advent" literally means "coming"; for Christians it means the coming of God. But is he coming? Can he come in the midst of an all-too-hectic season marred by news of war, exhaustion, commercialism, signs of external and internal misery all around?

Maria Boulding's *The Coming of God* addresses these very questions. Advent, at the onset of winter, is a time of inner desert, when our limitations, our brokenness, the chaos of our lives are felt acutely. Using both Scripture and the insights of our spiritual tradition, Boulding shows simply and forcefully that Christ's coming is found precisely in those moments of tedium, loneliness, or helpless need, which can become blessed times if we but continue to trust God's love, his creative spirit revealed in the manger and the cross.

Writing on the longing for God, the risk of promise, and the winters of the spirit, Boulding leads the reader to "glory reinterpreted" and the "sacrament of Advent," the comforting realization that God's promise "works out in ordinariness . . . and the humdrum quality of most of our experience." This is Advent: to do ordinary things, to live in fidelity, to ponder mysteries we — like Mary — do not fully understand. And, like Mary, we are called to listen to the age-old promise, reflect on the word, and learn to live in attentive hope.

Available in St. Patrick's parish library:
Maria Boulding's *The Coming of God* (Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press).

Every Day Is



Thanksgiving

Giving thanks is a basic element of all religions. It is as old as humanity. In history, days of thanksgiving were proclaimed to celebrate very special events, such as the end of an epidemic, liberation from threatening disaster, the signing of a peace treaty, or a successful harvest.

Early Christians used the word "eucharist" (Greek for "thanksgiving") for the Blessed Sacrament offered in the Mass. Because the Mass is the greatest act of thanksgiving possible, the Church has refrained from instituting any celebration of thanksgiving other than the Mass itself. In the Catholic Church, every day is thanksgiving!

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Editorial staff: Communications Committee, with articles and photographs contributed by staff and other members of the parish community