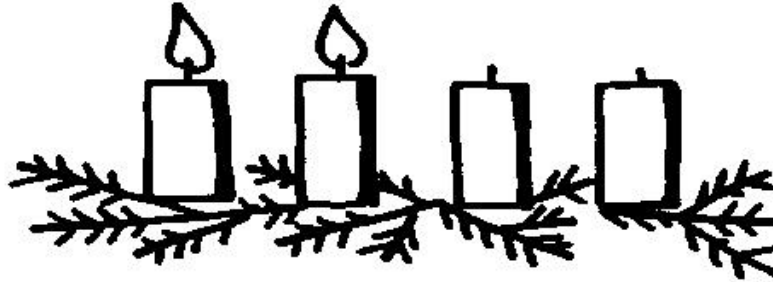


Zoom Meeting ID: 326 920 7504

Call-in option: 1) Dial 646-568-7788 or 929-205-6099, 2) Enter 326 920 7504 # and 3) Press # for a participant's ID



Hymn

You are mine

Artist: David Haas

The Invitatory and Psalter

Officiant Show us your mercy, O Lord:

Celebrants **And grant your salvation.**

Officiant Come and save us, O Lord God of hosts.

Celebrants **Come and save us, O Lord God of hosts.**

Officiant Show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved:

Celebrants **O Lord God of hosts.**

All **Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit:**

Come and save us, O Lord God of hosts.

Officiant The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

Venite Psalm 95:1-7

All **Come, let us sing to the Lord; ***

let us shout for joy to the Rock of our salvation.

Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving *

and raise a loud shout to him with psalms.

For the Lord is a great God, *

and a great King above all gods.

In his hand are the caverns of the earth, *

and the heights of the hills are his also.

The sea is his, for he made it, *

and his hands have molded the dry land.

Come, let us bow down, and bend the knee, *

and kneel before the Lord our Maker.

For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture and the sheep of his hand. *

Oh, that today you would hearken to his voice!

Officiant The mercy of the Lord is everlasting: Come let us adore him.

The Lesson

Reader A Lesson from *Matthew 3:1-12*

In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said,

"The voice of one crying out in the wilderness:
'Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight.'"

Now John wore clothing of camel's hair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then the people of Jerusalem and all Judea were going out to him, and all the region along the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins.

But when he saw many Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit worthy of repentance. Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham. Even now the ax is lying at the root of the trees; every tree therefore that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire.

"I baptize you with water for repentance, but one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire."

Reader Hear what the Spirit is saying to the Church.

Celebrants **Thanks be to God.**

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19 *Deus, iudicium*

All

Give the King your justice, O God, *

and your righteousness to the King's Son;

That he may rule your people righteously *

and the poor with justice;

That the mountains may bring prosperity to the people, *

and the little hills bring righteousness.

He shall defend the needy among the people; *

he shall rescue the poor and crush the oppressor.

He shall live as long as the sun and moon endure, *

from one generation to another.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown field, *

like showers that water the earth.

In his time shall the righteous flourish; *

there shall be abundance of peace till the moon shall be no more.

Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, *

who alone does wondrous deeds!

And blessed be his glorious Name for ever! *

and may all the earth be filled with his glory.

Amen. Amen.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit: *

as it was in the beginning, is now, and will be for ever. Amen.

Hymn #65

Prepare the way, O Zion

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen
Music: *Bereden väg för Herran*

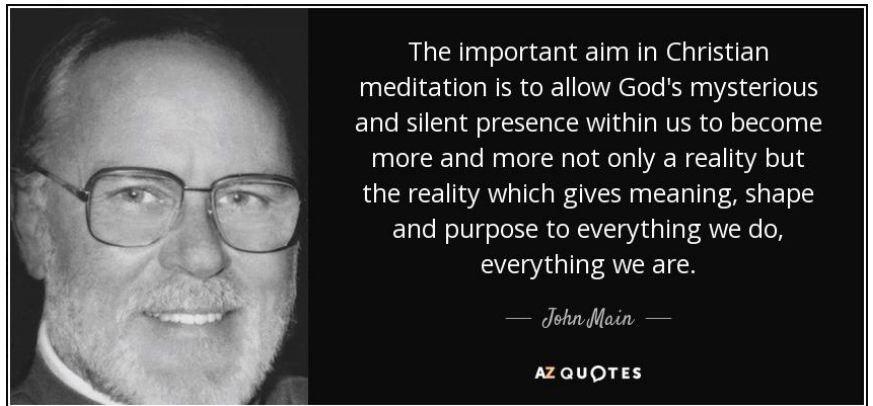
This Sunday gospel lesson continues the apocalyptic and eschatological theme of the First Sunday of Advent. Think of it as a sequel like *Blade Runner* (1982) and *Blade Runner 2049* (2017) or *28 Days Later* (2002) and *28 Weeks Later* (2007). If the gospel lesson on the First Sunday of Advent is about the uncertainty of when the end times would take place and how consistent preparedness is crucial, today's lesson is about what kind of event this eschaton would entail. St. John the Baptist's message is clear: "The kingdom of God has come near. Bear fruit worthy of repentance because all will be judged." Then comes the images of the winnowing fork to sort between wheat and chaff and the unquenchable fire to burn the chaff.

I sense that most of the end times movies take these images of judgment literalistically. In a typical zombie movie, for example, some are bit by zombies and turn to the undead themselves while others who learn to adapt to a new environment continue to survive and rebuild an apocalyptic civilization. Now, as we observe this Advent season, these images are solely for entertainment. These images might have worked as a fear-marketing strategy to gain Christian converts back in the old days. Yet, I question whether these images perceived by films deepen our spiritual lives. This fear-mongering interpretation of the eschaton doesn't sound so hopeful as we yearn for the coming of Christ who is the hope incarnate. What changes our hearts, after all, is not the message of fear. It happens when we encounter Christ, the incarnate kingdom of God within ourselves.

So, I would like to propose a different way of understanding today's gospel lesson that we can apply to our spiritual practice of contemplation. Let's pay attention to the verses below and ponder on them as we sit in silence.

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." (3:2)

The word "repent" carries negative connotations. Let's stick with the Greek term, "metanoia", the change of the heart, which is translated into repentance in English. This message of St. John is identical to the good news Jesus proclaims. It's not so much about changing one's mind or perspective. Here, its subject matter is the kingdom of heaven. It has come near and has always been that way. So, we need to change where we look at. Don't look outside. Turn our view internally and inwardly. The kingdom of God, the eternal, unconditional, and deathless presence of God is within.



"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor and will gather his wheat into the granary; but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire." (3:11b-12)

Baptism assures and ascertains the inner dwelling of the Spirit. The element of fire isn't much discussed. Fire in this context is unquenchable. It is the fire of the Spirit that purifies. In the presence of the Spirit within, pick up Christ's winnowing fork to sort out the wheat from the chaff. The chaff here is all our unskillful behaviors, and the wheat is all the skillful behaviors that we would like to continue. The chaff will be burned with the Spirit's unquenchable fire which is operated through our precepts of love of God and neighbor and conscience. To distinguish the wheat from the chaff, we sit in silence and have a long, loving, and judicious look at our behaviors. In contemplation, we face our motives and intentions of words and deeds and examine how we respond or react to each action. ask ourselves, "Is that action skillful or unskillful? Does it bring me instant gratification or long-term happiness?" We acknowledge and accept our failures and shortcomings without unfairly judging our self-worth yet fervently motivate ourselves for the better. Without this spiritual muscle which is gained from meditation or sitting in silence in the presence of God, we have no strength to hold the winnowing fork and to toss the stalks and heads of grain into the air, in the face of the breath of God.

"Bear fruit worthy of repentance." (3:8)

Set our expectations high in this Advent season. Hope for changes. We will certainly bear fruit worthy of the change of the heart and get ready to enjoy it. Be nourished by that fruit. This spiritual nourishment will deepen our process of metanoia.

As night becomes longer, may we open up our contemplative eyes to see the light coming nearer to our hearts. Amen.

The Apostles' Creed

All I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth;

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.
He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.
He suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended to the dead.
On the third day he rose again.
He ascended into heaven,
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.
He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting. Amen.

The Prayers

Officiant The Lord be with you.
Celebrants **And also with you.**
Officiant Let us pray, singing

**Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy Name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
and the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

The Supplication *Pray responsively.*

V. For the hungry and the overfed
R. **May we have enough.**

V. For the mourners and the mockers
R. **May we laugh together.**

V. For the victims and the oppressors
R. **May we share power wisely.**

V. For the peacemakers and the warmongers
R. **May clear truth and stern love lead us to harmony.**

V. For the silenced and the propagandists
R. **May we speak our own words in truth.**

V. For the unemployed and the overworked
R. **May our impression on the earth be kindly and creative.**

V. For the troubled and the sleek

- R. May we live together as wounded healers.**
- V. For the homeless and the cosseted
- R. May our homes be simple, warm and welcoming.**
- V. For the vibrant and the dying
- R. May we all die to live.**

The Collect for Second Sunday of Advent

All **Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.**

For All Sorts and Conditions of Men

Celebrant O God, the creator and preserver of all humankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of women and men; that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are in any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; [especially those for whom our prayers are desired]; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them according to their several necessities, giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. **Amen.**

For the Parish

Celebrant Almighty and everliving God, ruler of all things in heaven and earth, hear our prayers for this parish family. Strengthen the faithful, arouse the careless, and restore the penitent. Grant us all things necessary for our common life, and bring us all to be of one heart and mind within your holy Church; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For our Enemies

Celebrant O God, the Father of all, whose Son commanded us to love our enemies: Lead them and us from prejudice to truth: deliver them and us from hatred, cruelty, and revenge; and in your good time enable us all to stand reconciled before you, through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For the Poor and the Neglected

Celebrant Almighty and most merciful God, we remember before you all poor and neglected persons whom it would be easy for us to forget: the homeless and the destitute, the old and the sick, and all who have none to care for them. Help us to heal those who are broken in body or spirit, and to turn their sorrow into joy. Grant this, Father, for the love of your Son, who for our sake became poor, Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For Knowledge of God's Creation

Celebrant Almighty and everlasting God, you made the universe with all its marvelous order, its atoms, worlds, and galaxies, and the infinite complexity of living creatures: Grant that, as we probe the mysteries of your creation, we may come to know you more truly, and more surely fulfill our role in your eternal purpose; in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

For the Aged

All Look with mercy, O God our Father, on all whose increasing years bring them weakness, distress, or isolation. Provide for them homes of dignity and peace; give them understanding helpers, and the willingness to accept help; and, as their strength diminishes, increase their faith and their assurance of your love. This we ask in the name of Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

A General Thanksgiving

All Accept, O Lord, our thanks and praise for all that you have done for us. We thank you for the splendor of the whole creation, for the beauty of this world, for the wonder of life, and for the mystery of love.

We thank you for the blessing of family and friends, and for the loving care which surrounds us on every side.

We thank you for setting us at tasks which demand our best efforts, and for leading us to accomplishments which satisfy and delight us.

We thank you also for those disappointments and failures that lead us to acknowledge our dependence on you alone.

Above all, we thank you for your Son Jesus Christ; for the truth of his Word and the example of his life; for his steadfast obedience, by which he overcame temptation; for his dying, through which he overcame death; and for his rising to life again, in which we are raised to the life of your kingdom.

Grant us the gift of your Spirit, that we may know Christ and make him known; and through him, at all times and in all places, may give thanks to you in all things. Amen.

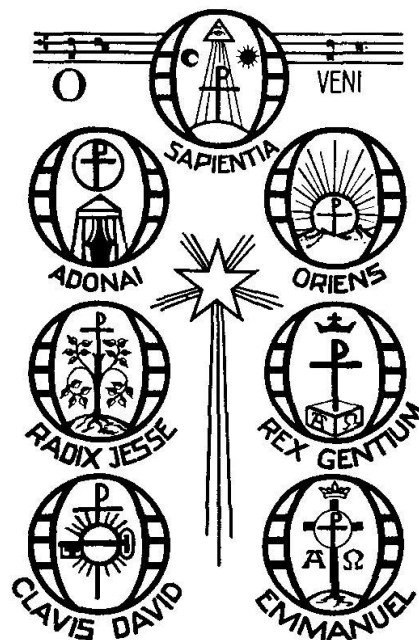
Officiant Let us bless the Lord. Alleluia, alleluia!

Celebrants Thanks be to God. Alleluia, alleluia!

Officiant May Almighty God, by whose providence our Savior Christ came among us in great humility, sanctify us with the light of his blessing and set us free from all sin. Amen.

May he whose second Coming in power and great glory we await, make us steadfast in faith, joyful in hope, and constant in love. Amen.

May all of us, who rejoice in the first Advent of our Redeemer, at his second Advent be rewarded with unending life. Amen.



Saint Agnes Church

65 Union Ave, Little Falls, NJ 07424

Serving people of Little Falls and surrounding communities since 1896,

Saint Agnes Church is a part of the Episcopal/Anglican branch

of the Jesus Movement in the Diocese of Newark, striving to be a contemplative community.