



BLESSED SACRAMENT LUTHERAN CHURCH

“Remove Christ from the Scriptures and there is nothing left.” — D. Martin Luther

Dear Saints,

28 Nov 2021

The First Sunday in Advent demarcates significant transition. You should sense that something momentous is afoot and that momentousness consists of the double helix of time and presence. Advent promises to bring us into that contemplative space that says, “We are one step closer to the coming of Christ; fulfillment is at hand because the One who fills all things has come, comes, and will come again.”

Sermons during this season will signal notes of fulfillment already but also fulfillment to come, all hinging on *presence*. Time and presence. Indeed, prominent in considerations of fulfillment will be the dual themes of presence and time, present *in* time — the real “in-flesh” presence of God with us and for us. So Advent, when sounding the presence of the King will cannot but connote elements of law, of accountability, of preparedness, for the King comes with power, authority, and justice. The King adjudicates accounts. But the point of Advent is *good news*; good news for those who are in Christ Jesus for there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Rom. 8:1). The divine in-flesh presence is for our salvation and constitutes the substance of divine self-giving. There is no Advent without in-fleshment, incarnation, be it then, now, or the Last Day.

The Advent of the Christ *has* occurred. The Son of God was born of the Virgin Mary. And, yet, that Advent has ongoing and climatic elements. All three time referents hinge on the presence of Christ Jesus, such that is captured in the liturgical Memorial Acclamation: “Christ has died. Christ is risen. Christ will Come again.” Again, the theme is the presence, activity, and accomplishments of the Lord Jesus. “Christ has died” encapsulates the climax of the *first* Advent. The birth, life, and death of Jesus accomplished salvation — here we have the first fulfillment. “Christ is risen” sets forth not only the resurrection but also the pledged and ongoing presence of Christ in the Eucharist: hence the Memorial Acclamation’s conspicuous placement *within* the Eucharistic liturgy. Recalling the fulfillment of the Passover Haggadah on the cross whereby Christ’s shed blood coupled with drinking the last cup of the “fruit of vine” constitutes or “finishes” (John 19:30) the transference from the old into the new covenant, Christ rises to be truly present for His people as the once-crucified-now-resurrected Bread of Life/ Drink of God. “Christ is risen” heralds the ongoing act of Christic self-giving in Holy Communion as the fulfillment of the promise, “Surely I will be with you always, even to the end

of the age” (Matt. 28:20). Lastly, “Christ will come again” jolts the Church to own the fact that this current state of affairs has a terminal point, and it is ever upon us. Consequently, the Advents of Christ (past, present, and future) elicit faith in the word of Christ, confirmed by His presence. He *has* come. He *comes*. And He *shall* come again. Now, therefore, is the time of faith; now is the time for faithfulness.

The First Sunday in Advent isn’t merely the start of Advent but also the church year. The church year, however, has a shape: It is more like a circle than a straight line. The cycle of the seasons of the church’s year repeats as we move through time in celebration of or in greater dependence upon the grace of God. The season of Advent stresses our need to be renewed by that grace as we focus especially on the three comings of our Lord — born of Blessed Virgin Mary, borne of bread and wine, borne upon the clouds. That’s what the word “Advent” means, of course. Advent is “coming” and the one, holy, catholic and apostolic church has rightly and therefore traditionally celebrated these various “comings” of the Lord Jesus Christ in Advent.

Advent therefore presents an ideal opportunity for us to engage our imaginations, weaning them from postmodernity’s post-Christian “social imaginary,” in which the *presence* of God has been entirely ruled out. What is more, Advent presents a deeply and honestly biblical framework for those believers who affirm the presence of God in Christ to actually find Him where and how He said He would be present — in the pure preaching of the Gospel and the Sacraments administered according to the Gospel. Stated plainly, the Advents of Christ countermand all attempts to domesticate Christ through sentimentalism (a la Victorian Christmas) or docetism (spirit-Jesus in my heart). All the Advent enfleshment depictions of the one Christ (crucified Christ, transformed by the resurrection Christ, glorified Christ) bespeak of and terminate in the atonement. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world; the blood of the new covenant shed for you for the forgiveness of sins; the Lamb who *was* slain.

Advent is a time of expectation; it is a time of remembrance; it is a time of hope; and it is especially a time of preparation by faith for all His comings. With Christmas ever looming over the heads of our auditors (thanks to the undignified commercialization of the event compounded by consumer impulses), preachers do well to terminate sermons about the future coming of Christ and the anniversary celebration of Christmas in the here-and-now communing upon the flesh of Christ — the Communion of Incarnation — especially since the first Advent was purposed to this end (foreshadowed by the infant being placed in a feeding trough ... a veritable paten) and the final Advent will inaugurate an eternal feasting on Him as the fruit of the Tree of Life (Rev. 22:2).

ADVENT	Nov. 28 2021	First S. in Advent (Ad Te Levavi)	Jer. 23:5–8	Psalm 24	Rom. 13:(8–10) 11–14	Matt. 21:1–9
	Dec. 5	Second S. in Advent (Populus Zion)	Mal. 4:1–6	Psalm 50:1–15	Rom. 15:4–13	Luke 21:25–36

On a personal note, I’m grateful to be home with you; grateful to be worshipping at Blessed Sacrament. There is much to share and our Augsburg Academy will provide a forum for doing so over the next two weeks — photos included. Coming home at the start of Advent is doubly sweet. Midweek Adventen Mass happens on Wednesdays. (A prompt will be issued to that

effect.) And there is the upcoming First Holy Communion of a six of our children. Nothing could lift my spirits more, save being with my family.

There's a tradition of *not* singing Christmas carols or hymns until Christmas Eve. I care nothing for that tradition. We'll still observe the Twelve Days of Christmas, but the theology of the Incarnation is too rich to leave to two Sundays. No, we'll role them out throughout the Advent. It may take me a few days to get my feet under me, jet-lag and all, but your cheer, prayers, and presence will sustain me throughout the Season.

Our prayers are especially with Lara and the entire MacPherson family upon the death of Lara's father. So, too, our prayers are with Laughlin and Ryan as the time of labor draws near. So much excitement in the Drake household, praise be to God.



During Advent we will observe the most ancient "Entrance Rite" of the church. I'll provide instruction to the Order of St. Vincent on Sunday. In short, a *Hymn of Invocation* is sung without procession while the cleric and acolytes remain near the font. Confession & Holy Absolution takes place at the Font. The cleric and acolytes process in during the chanting of the Psalm, followed by the singing of the Kyrie. They hymn of praise is omitted during the season. We continue as ever with the remainder of Mass.

First Sunday 24 Nov. Color: **BLUE**. Divine Service 1. Hymn of Invocation 331. Psalm 24 chanted responsively; Blessing and Lighting of the Advent Wreath; Hymn of the Day 332; Eucharistic Hymn, 940; Recessional 355. Sermon: St. Matthew 21.1-9 "Jesus into the Perfect Storm."

Augsburg Academy: Missional Endeavors Abroad — Slides and Stories with Q&A.

- * First Holy Communion Final Catechesis, Session 8 @ the Church Saturday 27 Nov @ 0900. Practice Session. Wednesday before mid-week Mass would be a good time to schedule private confession and Holy Absolution.
- * Confirmation Catechesis, Lesson 3: TBD
- * Logos & Lager on hiatus for December but resuming in January.
- * **Christmas Party @ the Bombaro home, 5pm Saturday 18 Dec. Please bring an appetizer and White Elephant Gift (kids version and adult version) for each person in your party who would like to play. Gifts \$10 and under. Carol singing. Ugly sweater contest. Bring friends. No humbugs.**