

**Church of the Divine Love**

**THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**DECEMBER 17, 2023 10:15 AM**

**HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II**

THE WORD OF GOD

Processional Hymn **#56, vs. 5&6 – O come, O come, Emmanuel**

Opening Acclamation page 355

Collect for Purity page 355

Gloria (sung) page 356

Collect of the Day - lectionary sheet insert

First Lesson: **Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11**

Psalm 126

Second Lesson: **1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**

Gradual Hymn **#72 – Hark! the glad sound!**

Gospel: **John 1:6-8, 19-28**

Sermon – The Rev. Jean Lenord Quatorze (printed on insert)

The Nicene Creed page 358

Prayers of the People, Form IV page 388

The Peace

Welcome and Announcements

THE HOLY COMMUNION

Offertory Hymn **#59 – Hark! a thrilling voice is sounding**

Doxology (sung)

The Great Thanksgiving:

|   |          |
|---|----------|
| Eucharistic Prayer B                                      | page 367 |
| Sanctus (S-130 in hymnal)                                 | page 367 |
| Hymn during Consecration printed on insert                |          |
| The Lord's Prayer   | page 364 |
| The Breaking of the Bread, Anthem & Prayer                | page 337 |
| The Communion of the People                               |          |
| Communion Hymn <b>#438 – Tell out, my soul</b>            |          |
| Post Communion Prayer                                     | page 365 |
| Prayer for Peace – on insert                              |          |
| Prayer of St. Francis                                     | page 833 |
| Dismissal Hymn <b>#444 – Blessed be the God of Israel</b> |          |
| Dismissal   |          |

### Sermon Sunday December 17, 2023

Isaiah 61: 1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28.

#### **Sisters and brothers in Christ,**

There are, today's gospel suggests, two ways of approaching life and God's presence in the world. One way is demonstrated by John. The other way is demonstrated by the priests and Levites. We are either witnesses or interrogators. John was a witness sent from God. The priests and Levites were interrogators sent by the religious authorities. "Who are you," they ask John. "Are you Elijah?" "Are you the prophet?" "Why are you baptizing?" They know neither themselves nor the one stands among them. They are in the dark. That's how it is with interrogators. Witnesses, however, are different. They talk about light. They know the light.

John knows who he is and who he is not. He claims for himself neither too much nor too little. That's what makes him a credible witness. He speaks the truth but he is not the truth. He is illumined but he is not the light. He is the voice of one crying out in the wilderness but he is not the Word of God. Everything about John points to the light and the life of the one who both stands among us and the one who is coming. John will bet his life on that one. That's how it is with witnesses. They live and die based on what they have seen, heard, and experienced. The real difference between witnesses and interrogators is this. Interrogators demand answers. Witnesses offer hope. More than ever our world

today needs witnesses of hope. We do not need more answers or explanations. We have enough interrogators. We need to hear “the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord.’”

That’s what the priests and Levites are doing with John. They come to him with the usual answers of who he should be; the Messiah, Elijah, the prophet. But he won’t allow them to do that to him. He doesn’t fit their expectations or categories. They do not know the one who stands among them. Sometimes we just don’t see the one who stands among. What if John is saying to us that this one has always been among and still is? That would be a more literal translation of the Greek. The grammar suggests that this one has stood among us in the past and continues to do so now. It also suggests that we did not recognize the one then and we still do not now. And that raises a good question. Why don’t we recognize the one who stands among us? Maybe the greatest barrier to seeing the divine presence among us is that we already have an idea or image of who that one is or should be and what that one should look like and do. In other words, we think we know and we stick with what we think we know. We can’t see the one because he or she does not meet our expectations or fit our categories of who he or she can be. Sometimes, we don’t see the one among us because he or she stands outside the box of our beliefs. And more often than not we see and hear in such a way that it only confirms what we already believe.

John’s is the voice of hope. His words echo through the wildernesses of our world and our lives. John’s, however, was not the first voice of hope. Before John, Mary was proclaiming the greatness of the Lord. She spoke of the one who shows favor to the lowly, offers mercy, and lends the strength of his arm. He fills the hungry with good things and comes to the help of his people. Before Mary, there was Isaiah. The Lord anointed him to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and release to the prisoners. He spoke about God comforting those who mourn and rebuilding the ruins of their lives. They will be clothed in garments of salvation and wear robes of righteousness. John, Mary, Isaiah. Each one is a witness of hope. They look at the circumstances of their life and world and see a greater reality. They each testify to a life and presence beyond their own. Within each of their voices is the Word that was in the beginning, the Word that was with God and was God, the Word that became flesh and dwells among us, the Word that enables us to become children of God (John 1). Everything that needs to be said was spoken in that one Word. That Word is our ultimate hope.

Think about the tragedies and difficulties of your life: the death of a loved one, an illness, an addiction, a divorce, guilt, the sin that separated you from God, others, and yourself. Answers and explanations did not sustain you. How, when, what, or why was not what you needed to hear. It was the Word of hope that got you through it all. Hope doesn’t make life easy. It makes life possible. Hope reminds us that it won’t always be like this. There is light and life coming to us. It is already here among us. The interrogators of the world, however, make it difficult to hear that other voice, the witness of hope. The interrogators clamor and compete for our attention. They often speak the loudest but the voice of hope has never been silenced. Which voice do we listen to? Which voice do we follow? Those are questions we must answer every day. The reality of humanity is that we are a people of the wilderness. The reality of God is that God is the God of hope. Do we trust the voice of the wilderness or do we trust the voice of the one crying out in the wilderness? The voice we listen to is the voice with which we will speak. We will become either witnesses or interrogators. We choose who we want to be.

Hope is not easy. We must practice hope. It means we rejoice always; we pray without ceasing, we give thanks in all circumstances (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18). These practices enable us to both hear and become the voice of hope. Interrogators will look at and question the circumstances of rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks. Are the circumstances right for rejoicing, praying, and giving thanks? Is there reason for those things? They want answers, justifications, and reasons. Witnesses, however, look beyond the circumstances to the God who fills those circumstances. That is hope. It opens our eyes to see the one who is coming. It prepares our heart to welcome the one who is already among us. It makes straight the way of the Lord. Hope is not a feeling but an orientation and attitude of our life. It is a way of seeing. It allows us to recognize and know the Christ, already here and not yet here. Hope does not change the circumstances of our life it changes us and those changes everything.

And that is not a negation or diminishment of who Jesus is or what he has done. It is rather, a fulfillment of who he is and what he has done. I am not saying anything Jesus himself did not first say. "Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these" (John 14:12). Isn't that exactly what we prayed for in today's collect: "Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us." This one who stands among us is the stirred-up power of God, a spoon in the hand of God. Among you stands one whom you do not know. Words of hope. Words of promise. Words of God's faithfulness. **Amen!**

Enclosed are Christmas flower memorial envelopes. Please list the names of you want listed and return by next Sunday.

|           |          |                            |                |
|-----------|----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| 3 ADVENT  | 10:15 AM | HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II    | (also on zoom) |
|           |          | COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS        |                |
|           | 11:15 AM | VESTRY MEETING             |                |
| MONDAY    | 8:30 AM  | AA MEETING                 |                |
| WEDNESDAY | 7:00 PM  | AL-ANON MEETING            |                |
| THURSDAY  | 10AM-2PM | THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE |                |
|           | 8:30 AM  | AA MEETING                 |                |

|               |          |                            |                |
|---------------|----------|----------------------------|----------------|
| SAURDAY       | 10AM-2PM | THRIFT SHOP CHRISTMAS SALE |                |
| 4 ADVENT      | 10:15 AM | HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II    | (also on zoom) |
|               |          | COFFEE HOUR FOLLOWS        |                |
| CHRISTMAS EVE | 7:30 PM  | HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II    |                |
| CHRISTMAS DAY | 10:15 AM | HOLY EUCHARIST, RITE II    |                |

|                      | Today        | Next Week    |
|----------------------|--------------|--------------|
| Eucharistic Minister | Jess Berbeck | Jess Berbeck |
| Coffee Hour          | Dana Kenn    | Jess Berbeck |

SUPPORT THE FOOD PANTRY – DROP-OFF IN THE KITCHEN

### PARISH PRAYER LIST

Loving God, comfort and heal all those who suffer in body, mind or spirit. Give them courage and hope in their troubles and bring them the joy of your salvation. Especially we remember before you:

|                    |                  |        |
|--------------------|------------------|--------|
| Grace Schinella    | Donna Edwards    | Jess   |
| Bob Curley         | Michael & Family | Art    |
| Chris Dickson      | Kate Jones       | Deb P. |
| Michael Echevarria | John Rocco       | Judy   |

|                        |                |           |
|------------------------|----------------|-----------|
| Christopher            | Warren         | Kristen   |
| Charlotte H.           | Bernie Walther | Celeste   |
| Mo                     | Phil Ryder     | Carolyn   |
| Anthony Paribello      | Barbara Curran | Del       |
| Robert Hosey           | Lourdes S.     | Aidan     |
| Sally & Roger          | Sophia         | Carol K.  |
| Mary & Family          | Ciara          | Dennis L. |
| Nathan Treadwell       | Gladys Hadija  | Vincent   |
| Jean Estinvil Quatorze | Jean Wildy     | Nicolas   |

All people and countries suffering from violence, hatred and natural disasters.

Help us speak words of encouragement and offer deeds of kindness to them.  
Bring us with them, into the unending joy of your kingdom. Amen.

Prayer before Worship

Almighty God, who pours out on all who desire it, the spirit of grace. Deliver us, when we draw near to you, from coldness of heart and wanderings of mind, that with steadfast thoughts and kindled affections we may worship you in spirit and in truth; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Hymn to be sung during the consecration:

Father I adore you,

Lay my life before you,

How I love you.

Repeat twice with second verse starting with Jesus  
and third verse starting with Spirit.

Prayer for Peace

Eternal God, in whose perfect kingdom no sword is drawn

but the sword of righteousness, no strength known but the strength of love: So  
mightily spread abroad your Spirit, that

all peoples may be gathered under the banner of the Prince  
of Peace, as children of one Father; to whom be dominions  
and glory, now and for ever. Amen