



Church of the Ascension

ascensionsaratoga.org | 408-725-3939

Masses: (Sat) 5p; (Sun) 7a, 9a, 11a, 5p

(Mon-Fri) 8a; (Sat) 9a

Confessions: (Sat) 4p – 4:45p

December 15, 2024

Third Sunday of Advent

Zep 3:14-18a | Phil 4:4-7 | Lk 3:10-18

Written by
THE
FAITHFUL
DISCIPLE

GROW AS A DISCIPLE | PRAY, STUDY, ENGAGE, SERVE

"I want to be a sanctuary lamp," Samantha, my childhood friend, once remarked. "To be the little flame that reminds everyone, 'God is here.'" In those short phrases, Samantha summarized not only her personal vocation, but also the all-important mission of St. John the Baptist. Like the candle burning before the tabernacle, St. John was not the long-awaited Messiah; his God-given task was to point others to Jesus. We hear this theme of St. John's message expressed repeatedly in today's readings: "The King of Israel, the Lord, is in your midst"; "Great in your midst is the Holy One of Israel!"; "one mightier than I is coming." God himself would soon be among them – indeed, he was already there. Although 2,000 years separate us from St. John the Baptist's ministry, the little flame still burns in the sanctuary to remind us that God has not only come, but he remains *in our midst*. This is cause for rejoicing: the same Jesus to whom John pointed is present among us in the Blessed Sacrament.

GO EVANGELIZE

PRAYER, INVITATION, WITNESS, ACCOMPANIMENT

Becoming more attuned and attentive to Jesus in the Holy Eucharist – that is, to God in our midst – entails embracing another part of St. John the Baptist's message. In today's Gospel, St. John counsels people from all walks of life to prepare for the coming Messiah by changing their lives. Only by turning away from sin and committing themselves to God will they be able to recognize and follow Christ when he comes. If we desire deeper faith in the Eucharist, our preparation must be similar: we ask God to show us the dusty corners of our souls which we have concealed from his merciful love. Then, confident in his willingness to forgive, we approach him in the sacrament of confession. This is his ardent desire: that, having come among us, he might forgive and heal us. Such is the meaning behind the consoling words of the Prophet Zephaniah in today's first reading: "He will rejoice over you with gladness, and renew you in his love."

SING

*O Christ, whom nations sigh for
Whom priest and prophet long foretold
Come break the captive fetters
Redeem the long-lost fold*

The Forgotten Wrong

In an affluent society, the sin rarely referred to is avarice. We redefine it as ambition, upward mobility, or simply "doing well." But the clutch of personal possessions is still the spiritual stranglehold it always was. The needle's eye isn't getting any bigger, and our modern camels still won't pass through. John the Baptist offers several key remedies. First, share what you have with those who don't have. Second, don't cheat, ever. Third, don't keep striving for more. Finally, be humble. These remedies for avarice are countercultural. They also prepare the way of the One who is coming. -*Preparetheword.com*

Pope Francis: May Hope Spread

"Through our witness, may hope spread to all those who anxiously seek it. May the way we live our lives say to them in so many words: 'Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart and hope in the Lord!' (Ps 27:14). May the power of hope fill our days, as we await with confidence the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and glory, now and forever" (*Jubilee Bull of Indiction*, no. 25)

In his message to the XXXIX World Youth Day (Nov. 24), the Pope also challenges us to not only be "pilgrims of hope" but also "tireless missionaries of joy" because, "Those who hope in the Lord will run and not be weary" (cf. Is 40:31).

Acknowledgments

Last Saturday, 70+ people were at the Advent Gathering with Mary, sharing food and listening to speakers' reflections and personal experiences of Advent related to family or cultural traditions. Thank you to all the speakers and the Hospitality Team.

Christmas Mass Schedule

CHRISTMAS EVE

-Dec. 24: 5:00 pm (with Nativity Play), 8:00 pm

CHRISTMAS DAY

-Dec. 25: 7:00 am, 9:00 am, 11:00 am (**no 5:00 pm Mass**)

ADA 2024 Final Report

Ascension has reached **128%** of parish goal thanks to 153 families. If all pledges are fulfilled, we will get back **\$21,098**. Thank you for your generous support.

WEEKLY OFFERING - DEC. 8

-\$7,426 (basket: \$4,453; online: \$2,973). Goal: \$6,500.

-YTD: \$144,667. Budget: \$149,500.

-\$2,960 (Retired Religious)

Thank you for your generosity.

MASS INTENTIONS

Dec 14	Sat	05 pm	Julia Paes (L)
Dec 15	Sun	07 am	Dorothy Miller +
		09 am	John Sokol, Sr. +
		11 am	Cecilia Moreno +
		05 pm	Heather Opperman +
Dec 16	Mon	08 am	Felipe De Los Reyes +
Dec 17	Tue	08 am	Barbara Rosier (L)
Dec 18	Wed	08 am	The Gerrard Family
Dec 19	Thu	08 am	John Sudano +
Dec 20	Fri	08 am	Daniel Karis (L)
Dec 21	Sat	08 am	Fr. Rey Sarmiento (L)

Message for World Day of Peace

Hope has been a constant theme in all of Pope Francis' World Day of Peace messages. This is all the more true in his message for the 58th World Day of Peace, January 1, 2025, as the Church begins the Jubilee of Hope amid a combination of challenges facing the world today.

This year's message is "Forgive us our Trespasses: Grant us your Peace," underscoring the deep meaning of the Jubilee tradition that reminds us that we are all "in debt" to God, who in His infinite mercy and love forgives our sins and calls upon us to forgive those who trespass against us.

In the Jewish tradition, the Jubilee was a time of universal remission of sins and debts liberating the oppressed. The Pope notes that in our day too, this year of grace "is an event that inspires us to seek to establish the liberating justice of God in our world," marred by injustices and "systemic" challenges that Saint John Paul II termed "structures of sin." -*Based on Vaticannews.va*

O Antiphons - Dec. 17-23

"Antiphon" is rooted in a Greek word meaning "responsive, sounding in answer." During the week before Christmas, Dec. 17-23, a different scripture verse is sung each day at the church official evening prayer and also during the acclamation before the Gospel is proclaimed at Mass.

Each "O" antiphon invokes Christ with a specific Old Testament messianic title: O Wisdom, O Sacred Lord, O Flower of Jesse's Stem, O Key of David, O Radiant Dawn, O King of All Nations, and O Emmanuel. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah. -*More on usccb.org/prayers/*

Year-End Is Time for Giving

Cash

A cash gift is a convenient way to support the parish. Make sure your check is dated 2024 and received or postmarked no later than December 31, 2024, to receive a deduction this year.

Appreciated Securities

If you own investments that have increased in value (stocks, bonds, mutual funds, real estate), you can donate them to your parish and take an income tax deduction for the full fair market value and avoid declaring the capital gain of the assets as income. This is the equivalent of a "double deduction."

Retirement Plan Assets

When a distribution is made from your plan to the church, a tax-exempt organization, we will receive the full amount of what you gives.

Life Insurance

When the original purpose for a life insurance no longer applies (educating children now grown, providing financial security for a spouse now deceased), your policy can become a powerful and simple way to support the church. Name your parish a beneficiary of the policy.

For more info on these giving options and others, scan the QR code or visit dsj.org/ways-to-give/estate-planning/.

