

□ Let us Pray and Remember □

That the church may be fully engaged in the task Christ has entrusted to it and be found awake alert for the coming of the Lord.. We pray to the Lord.

That hardened hearts may be softened and straying steps guided home by the touch of God's hand as we begin the Catholics Come Home project. We pray to the Lord.

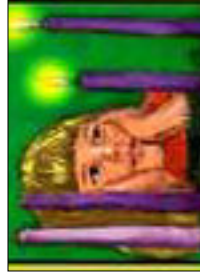
That the Lord God may cause righteousness and praise to spring up as a garden of peace for all nations. We pray to the Lord.

That those weakened by life's burdens may find hope in the care they receive from others. We pray to the Lord.

For our parish as we continue our search for a new pastor. We pray to the Lord.

That the sick may be supported by the presence and prayers of family and friends, and so experience the healing power of our Redeemer. Especially Kim Kurutz, Dorothy Gilbert, Rose Mary Goudry, Ryan Koutnik, Gerry Benson, Anthony Prebil, Jenna McKeown, John Scola, Marty Sheil, Therese Sheil, Genny Smith, Alicia Ricciardi, Mike Collins, Bobbee Clarke, Diane Viane, Lisa Druce, Baby Zander Abayon, Francine Augenbaugh, Gerald Narske, Frank Ritchie, Fabian Corhzalla, Larry Carso, Alan Cesario, Mary Cesario, Phylliss Winiecke, Sallee Larcieyea, Brady Barbeau, Eileen Manta, Lisa Urkoski, Greg Urkoski, We pray to the Lord.

That those gone before us in death may rejoice in the presence of Mary's child, Jesus, who saves the people from their sins, especially Irene Myszka, Helen Koziol, Anneliese Vincke, Joanne Gwiasda and James McTague.



If you are interested in belonging to the Ministry of Praise
contact Mary Kramer at 847-524-4429

MINISTRY OF PRAISE DECEMBER 2009 St. Marcelline Parish



Advent Blessing

*Let us go in faith
to ponder in our hearts
the mystery of this moment.
And may life be born within you,
Christ Jesus be seen among you
and joy surround you like the angel's song.*



Advent Prayers

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a wonder at the wisdom and power of Your Father and ours. Receive my prayer as part of my service of the Lord who enlists me in God's own work for justice.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a hunger for peace: peace in the world, peace in my home, peace in myself.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me a joy responsive to the Father's joy. I seek His will so I can serve with gladness, singing and love.

Come, long-expected Jesus. Excite in me the joy and love and peace it is right to bring to the manger of my Lord. Raise in me, too, sober reverence for the God who acted there, hearty gratitude for the life begun there, and spirited resolution to serve the Father and Son. I pray in the name of Jesus Christ, whose advent I hail. Amen

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, ever faithful to your promises and ever close to your Church: the earth rejoices in hope of the Savior's coming and looks forward with longing to his return at the end of time. Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope which his presence will bestow, for he is Lord for ever and ever. Amen.

Preparing for Visitors to My Home

They are coming! Oh, dear Lord, like the Wisemen wandering toward the stable, visitors are heading to my house. I am so excited about this visit. But I can get so side-tracked about how my house looks, or the food that I serve. I can only keep this prayerful with your help.

Help me to stay humble this Advent and Christmas season. You invite us into the humility of the stable where you were born. Help me to remember that humble-ness and the simple joy of your birth. Let me stay focused on my guests, not on myself and my worries about my house. Guide me in rejoicing in who these people are and in loving them freely.



A Christmas Prayer for Loved Ones

For those who have an abundance of love, a bounty in heart and home, keep them mindful of the world's poor, lift their voices often to you in gratitude, loving God.

For those who carry hurts and angers and other heartaches, help them to feel the peace which only you can give and the grace to let go of long burdening memories.

For those who struggle with the lack of this world's riches, those who know what unemployment and empty pockets feel like, gift them with a counting of blessings which are often hidden and far more valuable than earthly treasure.

For those whose faith has grown dim and whose sense of you seems far away, raise in their hearts a great yearning for you that will not cease and a desire for the truth that cannot be ignored.

For those who are tired, weary, worn from a constant generous giving of their lives in love, by their energy and enthusiasm, be a great and deep spark of light and happiness within them.

For those who grieve the goodbye of a loved one and whose hearts are very lonely this time of year, touch them with dear memories and transform the inner missing and heartache into a vision of what lies far beyond this time and space.

For those whose lives speak of growing old, bless again and again with peace and serenity, let them know what gentle witness they are to all of us who still ponder the meaning of life and growth.

And finally, savior God, for those with young eyes, keep their hearts full of wonder, and thank you for slipping some of their delight and simplicity into our own hearts each time we celebrate the Christmas moment. Amen.



A Christmas Meditation

We gather to celebrate the advent of Christmas. We look forward to an event that's already taken place. We look back and contemplate what is still to come. A mystery outside of time enfolds us.

Emmanuel, God with us,
Is with us as we are now.

We're aware of our redemption, but we're also only too aware of our weakness and our sin. Christ is gentle with us at Christmas, Presenting himself to us as a human child, a newborn

Whom we haven't yet had a chance to hurt.

Before Easter, we must face the truth of human cruelty, ignorance, blindness.

We must walk through the crucifixion and recognize that our voices mingle with the taunts of the maddened crowd, That our hands hold scourges and place the crown of thorns.

But before the newborn baby Jesus in the stable at Bethlehem, we need face only our hope.

We step quietly with the good shepherds, and our best instincts are called forth.

We can see ourselves reaching out to cradle the child in our arms, to speak the tender nonsense words that will coax into radiance the divine infant smile.

Like babies ourselves, we stretch out our hands

Towards all that glitters and is bright. We return to the dream of innocence.

The veil of heaven opens.

We are bathed in the starlight of love.

Night's shadows flee from our safe circle, and through our veins rushes the thrill of vivid, present joy.

We are one with God who is one with us.

We're all strong and good and giving to each other and to the baby who is God Who lets us hold him.



Watching the Sunrise During Dark, Mornings of Advent

Thank you. What a gift this morning from you as I watched the blazing sunrise through a cloudy winter sky. It is hard getting up these dark mornings, Lord, and yet you gift me with a sight that I miss at other times of year, when the weather is warmer and the sun rises before I get up. I stared out the window at the red and purple light, gloriously framed by the gold of the rising sun. "Be still, and know that I am God" was the only thing that came to me. I watched in silence, filled with a sense of your presence in my life.

I am filled with gratitude this day for such a treasure and could feel it and see it as a gift from you. Thank you for your love. Today, let me carry a sense of how much you love me to send me such a gift. Let that awareness of your love change the way I treat others today. Let me be more reverent in the irritations of the day. I ask your help to move through my errands and holiday preparations today with peace and a sense of your sunrise in my heart. Your glory fills my spirit and I want only to give thanks with my life this day

Wrapping gifts

Dear Lord, I am tired. I sit here surrounded by ribbons and paper, gifts and tags and I struggle to feel the spirit of giving. I can barely remember which gift is for whom and at moments it all seems so far from your birth. Help me to take this moment to think of the many gifts you have given to me, the many ways your grace has blessed my life. Help me to remember that each gift is a tiny mirror of the generosity I see so clearly in your life and of the many ways you shower me with such lavish and undeserved love. Let me sit here for just a moment and feel that joy in my heart. Thank you. Thank you.



Praying Over My To-Do List

I sit here with my list, Lord, and I know I need help finding a balance. I am so looking forward to Christmas Day, with the family here, the company, the wonderful celebration. But, Lord, there is SO much to do! When will it all get done? How will I maintain any semblance of inner peace in this "peaceful" season?

I think, Lord, that I need some balance in my life. I feel so torn between wanting to cook and fill my house with wonderful welcoming smells, and wanting to finish decorating the house. I have shopping to do, the house to clean and cards to write and mail. When? How?

Help me, guide me, Lord. Help me to set priorities around doing those things that will bring me closer to you. Maybe my house really is clean enough, or maybe I can ask my family for help. Can the cards wait until a quiet afternoon after Christmas? Can my house decorations be simpler? Is there more than a little ego involved when I want so desperately to have my house "magazine perfect" for the holidays?

Help me rediscover the joy of simplicity, Lord. Help me to remember what I am celebrating. Help me to find it in my heart to call out, "Come, Lord Jesus."

Shopping during Advent

Dear God, as I look through my gift shopping list, I hold up to you each person listed on it. Slowly, one by one, I ask that the fire of your abundant love burn within each of them.

I pray that the gift I find for each person will bring joy into that life. But, help me to keep a balance this season, Lord. Let me keep my buying in perspective, not to spend more than I need to or can afford. Let me not give in to the pressures of this world and not equate love with money spent. Let me always remember the many, many people who have so much less in material things. Help me to buy wisely, so that my choices will not burden those in other countries who are so deeply affected by this country's economy.

And finally, loving God, help me to find time in the frantic moments of each day to become centered on you. Walking through a store, riding on the bus, hurrying down a street: let each of these times be moments when I can remember your incredible love for me and rejoice in it.



Replacing the shoes, he blew out the candle and retired to rest. Hardly had he closed his eyes, it seemed, when he heard a voice call his name. "Martin!" Intuitively, he felt aware of the identity of the speaker. "Martin, you have longed to see me. Tomorrow I shall pass by your window. If you see me and bid me enter, I shall be your guest and sit at your table."

He did not sleep that night for joy. Before it was yet dawn, he arose and tidied up his little shop. Fresh sand he spread on the floor, and green boughs of fir he wreathed along the rafters. On the table he placed a loaf of white bread, a jar of honey, a pitcher of milk; and over the fire he hung a hot drink. His simple preparations were complete.

When all was in readiness, he took up his vigil at the window. He was sure he would know the Master. As he watched the driving sleet and rain in the cold, deserted street, he thought of the joy that would be his when he sat down and broke bread with his guest.

Presently, he saw an old street sweeper pass by, blowing upon his thin, gnarled hands to warm them. *Poor fellow! He must be half frozen*, thought Martin. Opening the door, he called out to him, "Come in, my friend, and get warm, and drink something hot." No further urging was needed, and the man gratefully accepted the invitation.

An hour passed, and Martin next saw a poor, miserably clothed woman carrying a baby. She paused, wearily, to rest in the shelter of this doorway. Quickly, he flung open the door. "Come in and get warm while you rest," he said to her. "You are not well?" he asked.

"I am going to the hospital. I hope they can take me and my baby in," she explained. "My husband is at sea, and I am ill, without a soul to whom I can go."

"Poor child!" cried the old man. "You must eat something while you are getting warm. No? Let me give a cup of milk to the little one. Ah! What a bright, pretty little fellow he is! Why, you have no shoes for him?"

"I have no shoes for him," sighed the mother.

"Then he shall have this lovely pair I finished yesterday." And Martin took down the soft little snow-white shoes he had looked at the evening before, and slipped them on the child's feet. They fit perfectly. Shortly, the young mother went her way full of gratitude, and Martin went back to his post by the window.

Hour after hour went by, and many needy souls shared the meager hospitality of the old cobbler, but the expected guest did not appear.

At last, when night had fallen, Father Martin retired to his cot with a heavy heart. "It was only a dream," he sighed. "I did hope and believe, but he has not come."

Suddenly, so it seemed to his weary eyes, the room was flooded with a glorious light; and to the cobbler's astonished vision there appeared before him, one by one, the poor street sweeper, the sick mother and her baby, and all the people whom he had aided during the day. Each one smiled at him and said, "have you not seen me? Did I not sit at your table?" and vanished.

Then softly out of the silence he heard again the gentle voice, repeating the old, familiar words, "Who so shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me." "For I was hungered, and ye gave me meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink; I was a stranger and ye took me in.

"Verily I say unto you, inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it to me."

It is Advent

It is Advent.
I am waiting -
waiting for Your coming, Lord.
There are so many places where I wait for Your coming.
You came to Bethlehem,
that time place of an almost forgotten promise.
You came to Nazareth,
an in-no-way spectacular town,
and you came to Bethany, Capernaum and Jerusalem.
There are places in my life that await your coming.
Here—where Your message of reconciliation is so needed—
or there—where Your tears
could fall like they did over Jerusalem—
I need You to come where it would take at least a choir of angels
to make the dulllest of hearts aware of something eternal.
I wait for your entrance into those dark places of disbelief -
the crude and mundane corners of my existence
so in need of starlight illuminations.
Come where there is little privacy, comfort or warmth-
where animals feed and lowly service is offered.
How many times have I plunged headlong
into the celebration of your coming
without being assured of Your actual arrival?
I have gone more days than three
“assuming You to be in our presence.”
But Advent is not for scurrying or for assuming.
It is for waiting.
May I recognize You when you come not as the peak moment of our
preplanned celebration, but as the subtle surprise,
the simple object of wonder, the God of small things.
I wait. Come, Lord Jesus, come.



Working in the Kitchen During Advent

What joy this brings me, Lord. Thank you for guiding me into the kitchen for some time of silence with you. The room fills with wonderful smells and I share tastes and samples with my family as they make extra trips through the kitchen on days like this. Thank you for each and every one of these special people in my family. They are like the ingredients of my own life, adding spice and heat and wonderful flavor and melding together into a unique dish designed to glorify you. You know, God, cooking is quite a bit like my life. It's messy, I get careless and sometimes things don't turn out as I had planned. But in the mess of my life, that's where I can turn to you. Help me when I have to deal with being so imperfect. Bless me with humility when I grapple with my own poverty. Let me feel how deeply you love me, even when all I have to offer is scorched and humble.
Be with me Lord, in this kitchen today. Help me to take the time in this intimate silence with you, to pray for each person who will eat this food. Allow me to remember all of those around the world who have so little food, and bless those who share what little they have.



Advent as I Consider the World Situation

God of comfort, these times seem so uncertain, so scary. The world seems darker than it has in the past and I am less sure of myself. Maybe that's a good thing; maybe now I am turning to you with a realization that I need you so much more and that my life is not in my own control. Let me not forget all of those around the world who are frightened at this moment. Help those who are victims of terrorism and war. Be with those who have lost so much in the past year. Hold us all in your loving arms and let us be comforted by the strength and peace you want to much to offer us through the birth of your son, Jesus. Thank you for the many gifts you offer us.



The Cobbler and his Guest

There lived in the city of Marseilles, a hundred years ago, an old shoemaker, loved and honored by all his neighbors, who affectionately called him "Father Martin."

One Christmas he sat alone in his little shop, reading of the visit of the wise men to the infant Jesus, and of the gifts they brought, and he said to himself, "if tomorrow were the first Christmas, and if Jesus were to be born in Marseilles this night, I know what I would give him.!" He arose and took from a shelf two little shoes of softest snow-white leather, with bright silver buckles. "I would give him these, my finest work. How pleased his mother would be! But I'm a foolish old man," he thought, smiling. "The Master has no need of my poor gifts."



Halfway through Advent - have I missed it?

Dear Jesus, It's halfway through Advent and I'm not sure what happened. I really wanted to make this a reflective and calm season, preparing for your birth and pondering how you came into this world in such a stunningly humble way. But it's so busy and I'm distracted and sometimes even short-tempered with those I love the most. Where are you in THAT? I am discouraged and wish I could start over. But as I sit here in the rare moment of silence, I contemplate your birth. In a bed of straw, with the smell of manure everywhere. It's a mess in that stable ... and come to think of it, my life is a little messy, too. I suddenly see that it is not just into the mess of the stable but into my mess that you enter the world. You came into a humble place and that humility is often where I live my life - feeling guilty or distracted and wishing I were a better person. But if I stop thinking of myself and focus on you, I realize that there you are, waiting to love me, even though I have so many unfulfilled good intentions about prayer, so many desires of how to change this fleeting Advent season.

I can begin Advent today and make this season deeper by making room in my heart for you. I can take just a moment before I get out of bed in the morning and feel the empty place in my life I so often fill with my busy-ness. It is there I need you the most. Come, Lord Jesus. Come into that dark and lonely spot in my heart. You know what my needs are more than I do. Let me feel your love. If I only carry that thought with me each day, it will prepare me for Christmas. Thank you, Jesus. It's not too late. You are waiting to enter my life today, where ever I let you in. Help me to open my heart in these remaining days.



Praying Through Exhaustion

Oh Lord, I am so tired. It seems like the lists of to-do's get longer each day, the frenzy in my home each night gets wilder. It seems like the holidays have barely started and already I am behind.

Help me, dear Jesus. Let me feel your loving arms wrap me tightly in the warm embrace of your endless love. Teach me to make choices about my time, to remember what is important this season and to say "NO" whenever my Yes would take me away from your peace. Fill me with patience, love and a sense of humor. Remind me of your deep love for me and let the fire of that love be something I can share with everyone around me.

Preparing for Christmas after the

Such a loss! Such a keen and tearing pain. Even when I am in a crowded room, there is a loneliness I never knew existed. Comforting God, I have turned to you so many times for solace, and I come again. While the world is bright and sparkling, my heart feels leaden and has an emptiness that cannot be filled.

Lord, how can I enter into this season of joy? In my head I celebrate your birth into this world, but in my everyday life, I am filled with a grief that runs so very deep. You blessed me with a loving relationship and now it is gone from my life. How can I be faithful to that love and the memory of that love and my sorrow in this season of "Rejoice!"? Tears are so close to the surface all the time and helpful friends who want to "keep me busy" don't seem to really understand that I need to embrace my grief. I am afraid of letting go of the sadness and losing the deep love connection I had.

Instead of entering into the Rejoice of Christmas, I long for the sorrow of Lent. I beg you Lord, show me how the two are connected. I ponder the name *Emmanuel* and know that it means "God with us." With us. With me in this world, in this sorrow. If I look beyond my pain, I know that you, too, suffered so much in this world. I never understood so clearly before that *Emmanuel* is what your nativity is really about. You are in my world, in my pain.

Thank you, Lord, for the loved one you blessed my life with. Grant me now in my grief, a peace. Give me a comfort that might not make the tears go away, but that lets me feel your presence as you take up a place deep in my heart, *with me*.

When Welcoming Christ is Hard

Elizabeth's utter amazement at the presence of the God-Child in Mary resonates with joy and humility. Her related response calls us to be equally astounded at everyone who comes into our life because each one is also a bearer of God's presence, although that presence might be hidden from easy recognition. Every person, no matter how mean or ugly-behaving, no matter how obnoxious or unsavory, no matter how irritating or unkind, has something of God within them, even though the Divine Presence is concealed from our view.

O Divinity in Disguise, open my eyes and heart to welcome you with the joy that Elizabeth welcomed your presence.

