

ADVENT 2020



*Reveal Your
Presence,
Lord*



OUR LADY'S IMMACULATE HEART





Open My Eyes SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29



*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see Your
face.*

*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear Your
voice.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like
You.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love,*

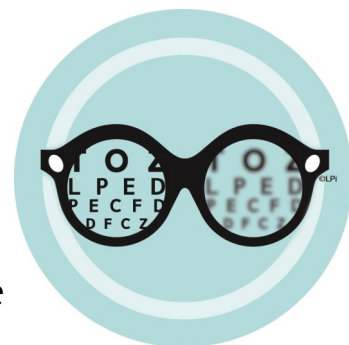
*I live within You.
Deep in Your heart, O
Love.*

*I live within You.
Rest now in me.*

Words: English Verses 1-3, 5 and bridge
text, Jesse Manibusan; English Verse 4 text,
Kelly Cullen, OFM; Music: Jesse Manibusan,
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When I was a senior in college I went in for a physical before starting my first “real” job. The nurse had me do a simple eye exam. When I finished she said, “now with your glasses on.” I looked at her blankly and said, “I don’t have glasses.” She responded, “Oh, honey, you need glasses.” I got glasses just in time for my finals. My first day wearing them I went to a baseball game and I was mesmerized by how sitting on the sidelines I could see the numbers on the player’s uniforms, I saw blades of grass not just green space, and flowers in the distance were more than just blobs of color. I also found that reading was so much better—less eye strain meant I could read for hours without headaches or eye fatigue. My glasses made clear things that I never before even realized I could not see. Glasses gave me 20/20 vision. When our vision is clear it is easier to watch and be vigilant.

Although we see with our eyes, not all people are able to see clearly without assistance. I wear glasses, others wear contacts, and others have surgery to assist them in seeing more clearly. Then there are those whose eyes are compromised in ways that they “see” the world through their other senses.



In the gospels we hear stories of Jesus healing the blind; imagine these people as both physically blind and spiritually blind. Spiritual blindness prevents us from seeing what God wants us to see. When I read the scriptures it’s like putting on a new pair of glasses in order to look at my life more clearly. Often we want to see things through our own perspective rather than looking through the lens of the Gospels challenging us to change our ways. I believe that we all have blind spots, Jesus helps us to eliminate those blind spots as we grow closer to Him.

In the words of that wonderful nurse years ago, we must all surrender to the fact that “oh honey, you need glasses” if we are going to see our lives, and 2020, with the eyes of God.



Pray— Bless— Light your Advent wreath

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Reader:

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
Upon those who lived in a land of gloom
a light has shone.
You have brought them abundant joy
and great rejoicing;
They rejoice before You as people rejoice at harvest,
as they exult when dividing the spoils.

—Isaiah 9:1-2

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader:

Lord our God,
we praise You for Your Son, Jesus Christ:
He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples,
He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us,
He is the Savior of every nation.
Lord God,
let Your blessing come upon us
as we light the candles of this wreath.
May the wreath and its light
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.
May He come quickly and not delay.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

*Light one violet candle of the
Advent wreath*

Reader:

"And as Jesus passed on from there, two blind men followed [Him], crying out, "*Son of David, have pity on us!*" When He entered the house, the blind men approached Him and Jesus said to them, "*Do you believe that I can do this?*" "*Yes, Lord,*" they said to Him. Then He touched their eyes and said, "*Let it be done for you according to your faith.*" And their eyes were opened."

—Matthew 9:27-30

All: "Lord, open my eyes so that I can see You in the world around me."

Song: "*Open My Eyes, Lord*" (see previous page)

Leader: May Almighty God Bless us and watch over us this Advent season.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



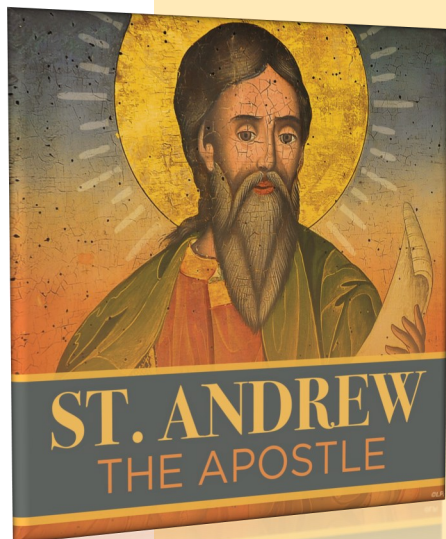
Connect: Take a picture of your Advent Wreath, or during your blessing and lighting of the wreath, then share it on our [Facebook](#) page!



Open My Eyes

MONDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Fr James and the Saints

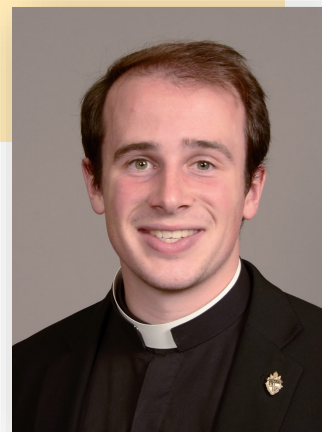


St. Andrew the Apostle, whose feast we celebrate today, shows us how our sanctity, our closeness with Christ, is meant to go beyond our own salvation.

One day, [John] the Baptist points out Jesus, calling Him, “the Lamb of God,” and so Andrew and another tentatively tail Him to figure out who this Jesus is until He turns and invites them to “come and see.”

In their subsequent encounter with Christ, their eyes are opened to God’s grace like someone turning on a light to “open the eyes” of someone blundering around in a dark room. Andrew did not want to keep this newfound vision for himself, and so went to his hard-working brother, told him that he had found the promised messiah, and led him to Jesus.

In Christ, Peter would too find his eyes opened to that same guiding light.



FEAST OF ST. ANDREW

Get ‘the rest of the story’ at our Advent blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



From the Faith Formation Team:

"Open My Eyes, Lord" Scavenger Hunt

Where do you see the signs of Advent?

Both around your house and around your neighborhood
how many of these do you see?

___ Advent wreath

___ Angels

___ Candles

___ Presents

___ Christmas lights

___ Candy canes

___ Christmas tree

___ Christmas wreath

___ Nativity set

___ Stocking

___ Jesus in a manger

___ Advent Calendar

___ Star

___ Christmas cookies

___ The word 'JOY'

___ Bells





Mid Week Examen

We are mid-way through our week. It's a good time to take a deep breath, and reflect back over the last few days. St Ignatius had his followers do a daily Examen. The Ignatian Examen is not the same as the Examination of Conscience you do before Reconciliation, it is a prayer to exam our consciousness. How aware, or conscious, are we of the things we do, or don't do, that either bring us closer or further away from God?

Keeping with our theme of the week:

- ☞ Relax into God's loving presence. Ask God to allow your eyes to be open, to see your day through His eyes.
- ☞ Review the last few days in thanksgiving. Mentally walk through the last few days—what did you do, who did you see—thank God along the way for the gifts that He has given you.
- ☞ Review the feelings that arise. What feelings arise as you look over the events of the last few days?
- ☞ Explore one of those feelings. When we explore our feelings we see with our heart. As you look at your feelings this week what do you see?
- ☞ The week is not yet over. Look ahead over the rest of the week—pray that God will open your eyes to see Him more clearly in the days ahead.



From today's psalm—

"I believe that I shall see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living. Wait for the Lord with courage; be stouthearted, and wait for the Lord."

2020 has been a year of losses. From mid-March through August everything on my calendar slowly was taken away, postponed, or cancelled. I got to a point where I expected to have things taken away, loss became a way of thinking and perceiving. Yet, in the midst of those losses and feeling helpless, I also began to have my eyes opened more and more to "see the bounty of the Lord in the land of the living."

There is bounty in our lives even in the midst of churches closing, pandemics, derechos, October snow squalls, and all the other bizarre events we have had this year. There are beautiful stories of what was all 'found' in the midst of loss this year—family meals, family time, quality social media time connecting us with each other, renewed prayer lives, and finding new ways of connecting.

There is beauty, but it takes courage to open our eyes and see what God has placed right in front of us. With eyes open, wait for God, and He will show you bounty in your life.



MEMORIAL OF ST. FRANCIS XAVIER

Get 'the rest of the story' at our Advent blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



Open My Eyes

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4

From the Gospel—

Jesus asked the blind men,
“Do you believe that I can do this?”
Yes, Lord” they said to Him.
Then He touched their eyes and said,
“Let it be done for you according to your faith.”
And their eyes were opened.”

Trust. Blind faith. These are the words that come to me when I hear this scripture. These men have never “seen” Jesus, yet they believe in Him and His power to heal them. Their faith opens their eyes. Do I have that kind of faith? Do I believe that Jesus can open my eyes? In what areas of my life do I need my eyes opened?



Get ‘the rest of the story’ at our Advent
blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



Journal Saturday

In the past week...

- Where did I see God?
- Where was I blind to God?
- Where do I need God in my life this upcoming week?



Open My Ears

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6



*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see Your face.*

*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear Your voice.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like You.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love,*

*I live within You.
Deep in Your heart, O Love.*

*I live within You.
Rest now in me.*

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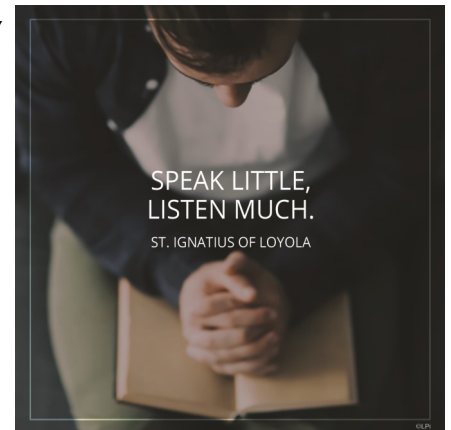
In the Gospel today we hear there is a voice of one crying out in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. This voice continues, "One mightier than I is coming after me."

What do we hear? Whose voice do we listen to, especially in the hard times?

While I went through my divorce it would have been easy to listen to the voices in our society that told me to be angry, to not forgive or forget, and to make him pay. But instead I heard two words that called to me from deep within: integrity and forgiveness. I knew that as I traveled this difficult time I did not want to lose myself. I trusted that through forgiving I could be true to who I am. Anger rose up many times, with the loud voice of society saying "yes, be angry," next to this solitary voice from within that said, "forgive." Forgiveness led me on the path of not losing myself.

A year ago we offered a CEW weekend for the Deaf and I was honored to be able to be part of the weekend. Spending time with those who are deaf or hard of hearing was both a challenge and a blessing. Sign language was an important tool used to communicate on the weekend. Several of us "hearing" folks were reminded that we cannot talk too fast and that we can only have one discussion happening at a time. Often in our hearing world there are multiple conversations, and lots of noise, but what do we give attention to?

The words and ideas that enter my ears fills my heart and my mind—what do I allow to have access to my heart and mind? During this past year what voice have you been listening to? The voice of those around you, or the voice of God within you?





Pray— Bless your Christmas Tree

Leader: Let us glorify Christ our light, who brings salvation and peace into our midst, now and forever.
All: Amen.

Leader: Family, amidst signs and wonders Christ Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea: his birth brings joy to our hearts and enlightenment to our minds. With this tree, decorated and adorned, may we welcome Christ among us; may its lights guide us to the perfect light.

Reader:
 Thus says the Lord God: *I, too, will pluck from the crest of the cedar, the highest branch.
 From the top a tender shoot, I will break off and transplant on a high, lofty mountain.*

The Word of the Lord.

All: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us ask God to send His blessing upon us and upon this sign of our faith in the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That this tree of lights may remind us of the tree of glory on which Christ accomplished our salvation, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That the joy of Christmas may always be in our homes, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: That the peace of Christ may dwell in our hearts and in the world, let us pray to the Lord.

All: Lord, give light to our hearts.

Leader: Lord our God, we praise You for the light of creation: the sun, the moon, and the stars of the night. We praise You for the light of Israel: the Law, the prophets, and the wisdom of the Scriptures. We praise You for Jesus Christ, Your Son: He is Emmanuel, God-with-us, the Prince of Peace, who fills us with the wonder of your love.

Leader: Lord God, let Your blessing come upon us as we illumine this tree. May the light and cheer it gives be a sign of the joy that fills our hearts. May all who delight in this tree come to the knowledge and joy of salvation. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

The lights of the tree are then illuminated.

Now light two violet candles on your Advent wreath

Reader:
 When they heard the sound of the Lord God walking about in the garden at the breezy time of the day, the man and his wife hid themselves from the Lord God among the trees of the garden. The Lord God then called to the man and asked him, *"Where are you?"* He answered, *"I heard You in the garden; but I was afraid, because I was naked, so I hid."* Then God asked, *"Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat?"*

—Genesis 3:8-11

All: Open my ears, Lord so that I can come to know and trust Your voice as a sheep knows the voice of the shepherd.

Song: *"Open My Eyes, Lord"* (see previous page)

Leader: May Almighty God Bless us and watch over us this Advent season.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Action: Go to our Facebook page and share a picture of your family's Christmas tree.

Bonus action: Share on our [Facebook](#) page a link to your favorite Christmas song.



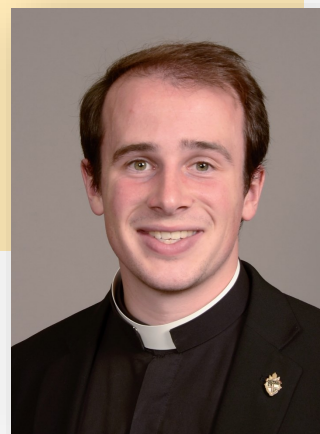


Fr James and the Saints



God calls each of us . That call might consist in ways of life such as the vocations of marriage, the priesthood, or the religious and consecrated lives. That call might be towards something right here and right now: to act, to speak, to pray for someone, a friend or a stranger. That call might come to us in any manner of ways: in the silence of the heart moved slowly, in the quiet of prayer and the study of the Word of God, through the grace of the sacraments, in the comment of a colleague, or perhaps—as St. Ambrose heard it—in the shouting of a basilica full of 4th century Christians.

Whenever, however, or whatever the call from God might be, are we listening?



MEMORIAL OF ST. AMBROSE

Get 'the rest of the story' at our Advent blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Mass at 8:30 am & 6:30 pm

From the Faith Formation Team:

Based on the description—

Name that Carol!

Jesus came to earth. He cared for
the sick and well. He was God with
us...

O_____.

Mary pondered many things; she
loved that baby so dear. In the still-
ness of the night...

I_____.

We shepherds saw them and were
afraid; perhaps we were scared we
might die. But these beings said not
to worry; they were...

A_____.

The Prince of Peace fought a war
no human could fight. Yet he came
in love rather than to blame, in the
stillness of a...

S_____.

The King of kings born in a simple
stall-what beginning could be
stranger? This simple act changed
the world. Jesus arrived...

A_____.



Away in the Manger

Angels We Have Heard on High

Silent Night

Answers: O Come, O Come Emmanuel

It Came Upon the Midnight Clear



Mid Week Examen

We are mid-way through our week. It's a good time to take a deep breath, and reflect back over the last few days. How have I been listening to God? Do I hear Him?

Keeping with our theme of the week:

- ✪ Relax into God's loving presence. Ask God to allow your ears to be open, to listen to your day through His ears.
- ✪ Review the last few days in thanksgiving. Mentally walk through the last few days – what did you do, who did you see—thank God along the way for the gifts that He has given you.
- ✪ Review the feelings that arise. What feelings arise as you look over the events of the last few days?
- ✪ Explore one of those feelings. When we explore our feelings we hear things differently. As you look at your feelings this week what do you see?
- ✪ The week is not yet over. Look ahead over the rest of the week—pray that God will open your ears to listen to Him more clearly in the days ahead.



From the Gospel—

"And if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah, the one who is to come. Whoever has ears ought to hear."

John the Baptist did not always say things that were comforting to people. He was the forerunner for Jesus, who would also challenge good people to re-evaluate their choices or stances. Do you know someone who has a gift of telling you what you need to hear even though you don't want to hear it? As much as you don't want to hear it, you know that you need to hear this. Are you willing to listen to the voices in your life that challenge you rather than comfort you? Are you willing to be that voice that challenges others knowing that it may not be welcomed?



Get 'the rest of the story' at our Advent blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



From the Psalm—

Blessed is the man who follows not
the counsel of the wicked
Nor walks in the way of sinners,
Nor sits in the company of the insolent,
But delights in the law of the Lord
And meditates on His law day and night.

We had a big election this year and there were many voices ready to “counsel” us on what is right vs wrong, just vs unjust, etc, etc. When I went through my divorce many people had “suggestions” on what I should do or not do. There are many times in our lives—in big decisions and in little every day decisions—where the world will offer “advice.” Our job isn’t to dismiss others, but to discern God’s voice in the midst of all the voices. What does God call me to?

Discerning God’s voice comes with knowing God’s voice. We learn God’s voice through daily prayer—prayer that involves not only speaking to God, but listening also. When we know the voice of God, we can hear it more clearly even in the midst of the noise and busyness that threatens to drown Him out.



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Journal Saturday

In the past week...

- When I slowed down and listened what did I hear?
- What did the world tell me?
- What did God tell me?
- Did I recognize God's voice?

FEAST OF OUR LADY OF GUADALUPE





Open My Heart

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13



*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see Your face.*

*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear Your voice.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like You.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love,*

*I live within You.
Deep in Your heart, O Love.*

*I live within You.
Rest now in me.*

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As we continue to see and hear the Lord revealing himself to us, may our hearts be opened.

In our second reading today Paul tells us to “Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. In all circumstance give thanks.” Wait, in *all* circumstances give thanks, even in 2020? ... **YES!**

Since March, I have learned to live with the pandemic—masks, sanitizer, physical distance, and video chatting have become a part of my daily ministry and quality time with others. In the beginning, my personal calendar was wiped clean month-by-month, ZOOM kept me connected to those I minister with/to, and trips out of my house were only necessary and quick. I could navigate the grocery store in less than 30 minutes, because I didn’t stop to ponder options, nor did I stop to chat. I knew what I needed and was focused on getting back home. As a single person I found myself disconnected from people, yet I found it difficult to connect, or even desire to connect, because I knew that home was safe, and, until we learned more about the virus, others were potentially dangerous. How often are we the same with our heart? We keep it safe and protected, we open it just enough to think we are taking a risk, but really we are afraid to risk opening our hearts because others are “dangerous.”

One of my favorite movies growing up was *The Wizard of Oz*. Dorothy walks the yellow brick road in search of Oz, and picks up companions on the way—the scarecrow, the tin man, and the lion—who are all in search of something they believe they are missing. The tin man lacks a heart, and feels hollow inside. In the end the wizard tells him, “*A heart is not judged by how much you love; but by how much you are loved by others.*” A few years ago I had a beautiful prayer experience that reminded me how easy it is for me to love God, but it’s not always easy to remember that God really loves me. Love only works if it is reciprocated—both given and received.

Open my heart, Lord, as I rejoice, pray, and give thanks, trusting that you love me and that I am made for love!





Pray— Bless your Family Nativity

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Reader:

In those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there, the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to her firstborn son. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Now there were shepherds in that region living in the fields and keeping the night watch over their flock.

—Luke 2:1-8

The Gospel of the Lord.

All: Praise to you, Lord Jesus Christ.

Leader: God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation You have made manifest Your love: when our need for a Savior was great You sent Your Son to be born of the Virgin Mary. To our lives He brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love.

Lord, bless all who look upon this manger; may it remind us of the humble birth of Jesus, and raise our thoughts to Him, who is God-with-us and Savior of all, and who lives and reigns forever and ever.

All: Amen

Say the following Blessing over the Christ Child in your nativity set.

Connect: In honor of Bambinelli Sunday, share a picture of your nativity scene on our [Facebook](#) page

Blessing over Christ Child in Nativity Set

God our Father,
You loved us so much, You sent us Your only Son, Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, to save us and lead us back to You.

We pray that, with Your blessing, this image of Jesus might be a sign of Your presence and love in our homes.

Good Father,
give Your blessing to all who gather with us this Christmas, family and friends. Open our hearts, that we might receive Jesus in joy, always do what He asks of us, and see Him in those who need our love.

~Pope Benedict XV

Now light two violet candles and ONE rose candle on your Advent wreath

Reader:

Make known to me Your ways, Lord; teach me Your paths. Guide me by Your fidelity and teach me, for You are God my savior, for You I wait all the day long. Remember Your compassion and Your mercy, O Lord, for they are ages old. Remember no more the sins of my youth; remember me according to Your mercy, because of Your goodness, Lord. Good and upright is the Lord, therefore He shows sinners the way, He guides the humble in righteousness, and teaches the humble His way."

—Psalm 25:4-9

All: Open my heart, Lord to receive your love, allowing it to flow through me into the world.

Song: "Open My Eyes, Lord"
(see previous page)

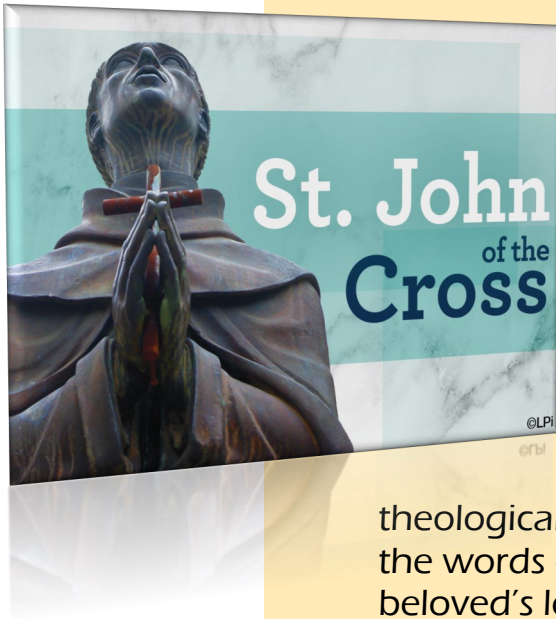
Leader: May Almighty God bless us and watch over us this Advent season.

All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.





Fr James and the Saints

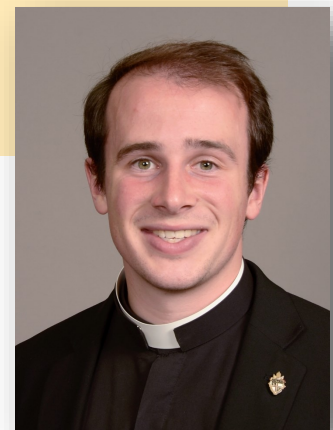


What does an open heart look like? A good example is found in the life of St. John of the Cross, whose feast is today.

John was a humble man of 16th Century Spain tasked with reforming the monks of the Carmelite Order, monks who would respond by kidnapping, beating, imprisoning, and nearly starving him. Strangely enough, on borrowed scraps of paper, this was when John penned some of history's greatest

theological love poetry: stories of God and a soul in the words of a Lover wooing His beloved and the beloved's longing search for the One she loves. John's open heart was able to recognize God's loving presence to him, even in the midst of his unjust imprisonment and suffering, and in Him, John found joy in God's closeness and strength to love and forgive his captors.

Where a hardened heart rejects joy wherever it might be found, a heart opened to God can find it even in the most unlikely places, even in a humble manger on a cold winter's night.



FEAST OF ST. JOHN OF THE CROSS

Get 'the rest of the story' at our Advent blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



From the Faith Formation Team:

Daily Service Challenge

Opening our hearts means several things, including serving others. Jesus—this week help us to find small ways to love like you—by putting the needs of “the other” in front of our own.

Tuesday: **Serve your Neighbors** — decorate & write a card to your neighbors and deliver it, if it snows or gets icy—shovel or salt their sidewalk & driveway.

Wednesday: **Serve Your Neighbors** —pray for your neighbors, give a quick (socially distanced) visit to see how they’re doing this Advent. See if there’s anything they need.

Thursday: **Serve your parish**—write a note of thanks/Christmas card to a priest/staff member, participate in one of the charity drives at the parish.

Friday: **Serve your town/community**—take a walk and pick up trash, smile at everyone you meet—you can smile with a mask on—use your eyes!

Saturday: **Serve the world**—pray for the world and make a small donation to a reputable charity.





Mid Week Examen

We are mid-way through our week. Time to take a deep breath, and reflect back over the last few days. How aware, or conscious, are we of the things we do, or don't do, that either bring our hearts closer or further away from God?

Keeping with our theme of the week:

- ✪ Relax into God's loving presence. Ask God to allow your heart to be open, to experience your day through His eyes.
- ✪ Review the last few days in thanksgiving. Mentally walk through the last few days—what did you do, who did you see—thank God along the way for the gifts that He has given you.
- ✪ Review the feelings that arise. What feelings arise as you look over the events of the last few days?
- ✪ Explore one of those feelings. When we explore our feelings we become more in tune to where and how our hearts are moved. As you explore your feelings this week what do you experience in your heart?
- ✪ The week is not yet over. Look ahead over the rest of the week—pray that God will open your heart to know Him more intimately in the days ahead.



From today's Gospel—

*"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the son of David, the son of Abraham."*

Today in the Gospel we hear the Genealogy of Jesus, connecting Jesus to David and Abraham. Why a genealogy? It is a depiction of relationship. These names represent those who came after Abraham, and before Jesus, connecting the history with the present. If you were to study these names you would find all sorts of people. Jesus didn't come from a long line of holy people, but from generation after generation of people who struggled to open their hearts to the will of God.

To me the Old Testament feels like a mantra of "trust God." When they trusted God they prospered, when they didn't trust God (and tried to do it on their own) life was hard. It's the same today. We need to open our hearts to trust God.

Today pick 3 or 4 of the names in this long list and find out something about them. Did they trust God? What can you learn from them about trusting God?



Get 'the rest of the story' at our Advent
blog, www.olih.org/advent-2020



From the Gospel—

When his mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph,
but before they lived together,
she was found with child through the Holy Spirit.
Joseph her husband, since he was a righteous man,
yet unwilling to expose her to shame,
decided to divorce her quietly.

In today's Gospel we hear the story of Joseph deciding to quietly divorce Mary so as to not expose her to shame. Then an angel comes to him in a dream "do not be afraid to take Mary into your home." *Do not be afraid.* Fear causes our flight/fight/freeze response to take over. I know that for me I freeze more often than I take flight or fight. What about you? How do you respond to fear?

Joseph was going to flee, yet, as a righteous man he was taking steps to protect Mary. Fear causes us to not think rationally. When we are living in fear our hearts are not open. So while he was *sleeping* the angel comes to Joseph and speaks to his heart. Upon waking, Joseph is able to live without fear, even though the road ahead will be hard. He trusts God's plan for his life with Mary and Jesus.

What does it take for you to overcome your fear?

Do you trust God's plan in your life?



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Journal Saturday

In the past week when was...

- My heart open to God's love?
- My heart open to love others?
- My heart open to hearing the voice of God, even if it challenged me?
- My heart open to seeing God's presence in my daily life, even when it was hard?



*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see Your
face.*

*Open my eyes, Lord.
Help me to see.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear Your
voice.*

*Open my ears, Lord.
Help me to hear.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love like
You.*

*Open my heart, Lord.
Help me to love,*

*I live within You.
Deep in Your heart, O
Love.*

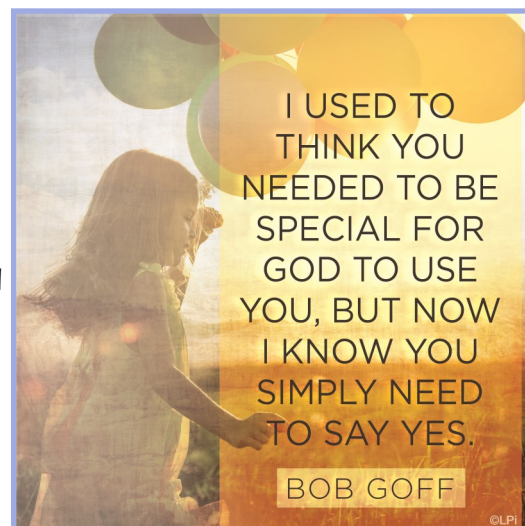
*I live within You.
Rest now in me.*

When I ponder the concept of opening my life to God, Mary is the first person to come to my mind. After the Angel Gabriel brings her the good news that she will bear a son and name him Jesus, Mary replies with, "Behold I am the handmaid of the Lord; may it be done to me according to your word." We hear similar words from Jesus as he prays in the garden alone after the last supper, "Father, if You are willing, take this cup away from me; still, not my will but Yours be done." Jesus wasn't as welcoming to the will of God at that point as Mary is at the annunciation, yet He knew the heart of the Father so intimately that He too said yes. Both Mary and Jesus knew that it would not be easy to do the will of the Father, that living a life of saying yes to God is hard. It requires us to see God in our lives, to hear His voice and know it so well that we hear it even when the world is louder, and it requires us to trust in God's will for us in both the little and big decisions.

Sometimes it is hard to trust that we can live up to the example of Mary or Jesus and how they said yes and allowed their lives to be opened to the will of God. Six years ago I read an incredible story of a man by the name of Louis Zamperini. He is known for being an Olympic runner and a World War II veteran. If you haven't read his story check it out (*Unbroken*—book or movie). During WWII, Louis was lost at sea for 47 days, and when he was rescued it was by the Japanese. He became a prisoner of war for the next two years where he became a regular target of one of the guards. After returning home, Louis struggles with life until he meets and listens to Billy Graham and turns his life around. In the end, Louis forgives his tormenter and finds peace. This is what happens when we open our lives to God—when we say yes to doing the hard things in life, while trusting that the fruit of what we do is far beyond what we can even imagine.

What parts of my life do I open to God? Is it just certain pieces, or do I give it all to Him?

When have I surrendered to God's will and what came from it?





Pray— For those who need your prayers

Leader: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

All: Who made heaven and earth.

Leader: This is the final week of Advent, the final days of waiting and anticipating the coming of Jesus. Jesus came to earth for each one of us.

During His ministry He tells us to care for others and that through caring for others we care for Him. So this Christmas, when our day-to-day world feels so different, celebrations are smaller, and traditions have been cancelled, how can we care for others?

One way we can do this is to pray for them. Who do you want to keep specially in our prayers this week?

Have everyone name the person(s) they would like to pray for.

Pause in silence.

Leader: O God, You wonderfully created us in Your likeness and image. When we struggled to live in unity with You, Your Son Jesus reminded us of our goodness and our friendship with You. He teaches us that we have a choice to love You and follow You in all we do. We pray, that we may love like Jesus has shown us.

Hear the prayers that we offered, and grant them through Your Son, who lives and reigns with You in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

All: Amen.

Light all four candles on your Advent wreath

Reader:

And the angel said to her in reply, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. Therefore, the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, Elizabeth, your relative, has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is the sixth month for her who was called barren; for nothing will be impossible for God." Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

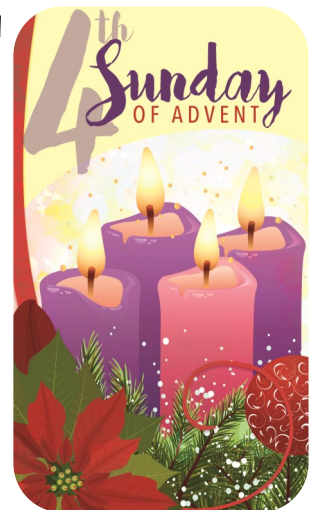
—Luke 1:35-38

All: Open my life, Lord so that I, too, can live the life You call me to .

Song: "Open My Eyes, Lord" (see previous page)

Leader: May Almighty God Bless us and watch over us this Advent season.

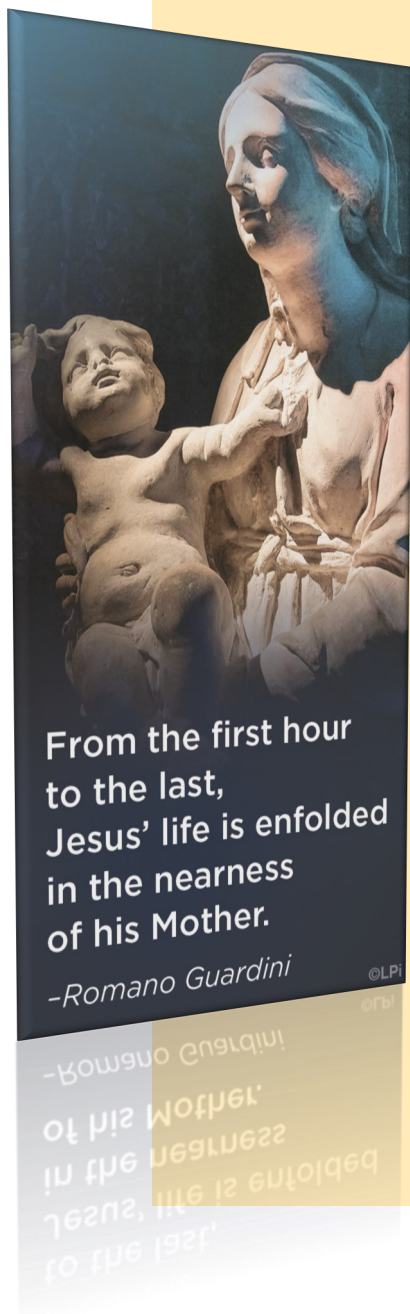
All: In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Action: On our Facebook page share your favorite Christmas tradition!



Fr James and the Saints

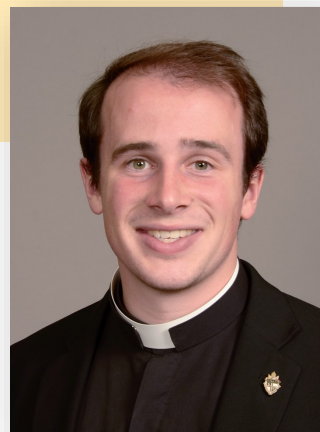


From the first hour
to the last,
Jesus' life is enfolded
in the nearness
of his Mother.

-Romano Guardini

This True Spring of Eternal Life (of which the yearly season is only shadowy sign and poor imitation) comes to us slowly, humbly, and hidden, made possible by one girl's life opened to God: blessed in belief, blessed among women, and blessed in the fruit of her womb. By her will united to God's, mankind's New Life enters the world, which she holds in her arms, wraps in cloth to keep warm against the winter's cold, and lays in a manger to rest. This New Life would not find its work of salvation fulfilled until many years later when His body would once again be held in His mother's arms, wrapped in a cloth, and laid to rest in another man's tomb, but at least that work could begin, all because of a life open to God.

Every Christian life is called to this: to receive the Word of God, to carry it within them, and to give new birth to God's salvation in the world. But it all begins with a life open to God...



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From the Faith Formation Team:

Ways to take time and rest as a family this week

Circle all that interest you and then decide, as a family, which 4 things to do.

(1 thing per day for the final week of Advent)

- ☐ Take 2-3 minutes each day to pray together (Our Father, 3 Hail Mary's, etc.—keep it simple!)
- ☐ Prepare a meal together (one-pot meals are a great idea!)
- ☐ Take a family nap
- ☐ Decorate Christmas Cookies together
- ☐ Drive around & look at lights
- ☐ Make a (store kit) gingerbread house
- ☐ Help with Christmas prep
- ☐ Listen to carols and sing along
- ☐ Go to bed on time /sleep in
- ☐ Play board games together
- ☐ Watch a Christmas show/movie as a family
- ☐ Play a video/app game together
- ☐ Read a Christmas story book as a family
- ☐ Have a no-tech day/night
- ☐ Order delivery or take-out. Kids clean up.





Mid Week Examen

We are mid-way through our week and tomorrow is Christmas Eve. Let's take a deep breath, and reflect back over the last few days. If God were to show up at my house for Christmas would I be ready to welcome Him into my daily life?

Keeping with our theme of the week:

- ☞ Relax into God's loving presence. Ask God to allow you to give your life to Him, to see your life through His eyes.
- ☞ Review the last few days in thanksgiving. Mentally walk through the last few days—what did you do, who did you see—thank God along the way for the gifts that He has given you.
- ☞ Review the feelings that arise. What feelings arise as you look over the events of the last few days?
- ☞ Explore one of those feelings. When we explore our feelings we see our lives a bit differently. As you explore your feelings this week what do you notice about your life?
- ☞ Christmas is in a few days, and the New Year is just over a week away. Looking ahead how will you open your life to God's will in your life? How does God call you to rest in His love for you?

Mass Times:

Dec 24 4:30 pm (Church & Multi-purpose Room)
7:30 pm (Church & Multi-purpose Room)
Livestreamed

10:00 pm (Church)

Dec 25 9:00 am (Church)



RSVP Required

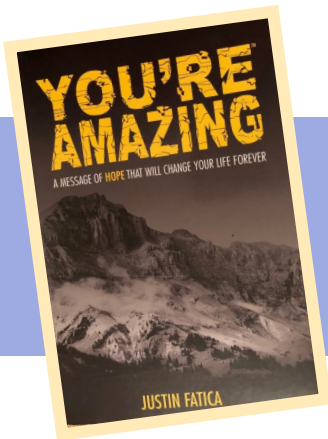
- Sign ups begin on Monday, December 7.
- Go online, www.olih.org > 'Parish Events' or call the office, 515.964.3038, and reserve your spaces with Amy (do not just leave a message).
- You must reserve all the seats you want together at one time.
- Note if you have any handicapped needs, request them at the time of your reservation.
- Doors will open 45 minutes ahead of Mass to allow enough time to seat everyone in a safe manner.

Action: On our Facebook page share a picture of your family celebrating Christmas together!



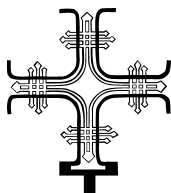
Go to our Advent page for more details and to follow our blog—

www.olih.org/advent-at-olih



Christmas Book:

This year we have limited copies of our Christmas book: *You're Amazing* by Justin Fatica. Pick up your copy while at Mass for Christmas and then join our blog/discussion online.



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