

Dear Parish Family,

Throughout the season of Advent, the Church has been praying for the coming of Jesus Christ. In early Advent the theme is the return of Christ as the Son of Man, coming in power and glory at the end of time. In the middle of the season, John announces the coming of the Christ at the end of time but also at the beginning of His ministry. On the Fourth Sunday of Advent comes the annunciation of His birth at Bethlehem. Advent weaves these themes of Christ's coming into a whole. The liturgy is a grand proclamation of the Church's faith in the Son of God and the certainty of His coming in power to fulfill God's purpose for the world.



Now we have come to the celebration of the birth of Christ at Bethlehem. The star guides the wise men, representative of the Gentiles' coming to faith in the true God who sent His only-begotten Son, to the place of birth. We join in their adoration and praise.

The Prayer of the Day for Christmas takes up the theme of light, "Almighty God, you made this holy night shine with the brightness of the true Light" (Renewing Worship 8). Replacing the celebration by pagans of the conquest of natural light over winter darkness after the solstice, the Church proclaims the true and everlasting Light, who is Jesus Christ the Lord, overcoming the darkness of sin and death. The child of Bethlehem who escapes the murderous rage of Herod will go willingly to the cross to free us from our sins. The angel announces Jesus' mission in the birth story, "you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins." (Matthew 1:21 NIV)

Though the world is shrouded in the darkness of sin, the Christian knows that the Light has come into the world. We are a people of the Light whose sins have been forgiven and who know that the Light has overcome the darkness. Darkness will completely evaporate at the end of time. The people of God pray, "Grant that here on earth we may walk in the light of Jesus' presence and in the last day wake to the brightness of his glory" (Prayer of the Day for Christmas, Renewing Worship 8, p. 58).

May the light of Christ shine on you and in you during this season of joy. May you have a blessed twelve days of Christmas.

In Christ,

Pastor Mike & Pastor Mandy