

The Second Sunday in Advent

6 December 2020

Grace Episcopal Church

827 Church Street
Honesdale, PA

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The SECOND Sunday in ADVENT, 2020
Virtual Grace

Organ Prelude -

“Comfort, comfort ye”

J. Pachelbel

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Hello and welcome to “Virtual Grace”
from Grace Episcopal Church in Honesdale, PA,
as we celebrate the second Sunday in Advent.
preparing for the coming of the Christ-child.

I’m Fr. Ed, the rector of our parish.
As the numbers of Covid positives has risen in this second wave,
our doors are again closed.

And yet, we are glad to continue to offer these broadcasts of “Virtual Grace.”
So many of you have followed us in this way since March,
for which we give thanks.

Your continued donations to the ministry and mission
of Grace Church in these turbulent times, have been deeply appreciated.
We know so many people are struggling - financially, socially, personally,
especially as we enter the holiday season.
It is our mission to aid any and everyone in whatever way we can,
to spread the Good News of Salvation
in whatever situation someone may find themselves.
If you are able to contribute to our ministry, we appreciate your help,
and your prayers.

And if you, or anyone you know, are in any pastoral need at all, call me, 24/7.
I am more than ready to come to your spiritual aid and visit you -
sadly, still with a mask!

Now, let us join our hearts and souls in praise to God,
knowing that our salvation lies only in our Creator, Redeemer and Sustainer,
in this life and in the world to come.

LIGHTING of the 2nd ADVENT CANDLE

Let us gather near our Advent Wreaths, and as I light the second candle, I invite you to do the same at home.

A reading from the letter of St. Paul to the Church at Rome:

You know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers; the night is far gone, the day is near. Let us then lay aside the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. *Romans 13: 11-12*

The second candle is lit.

Let us pray:

O God Almighty, as you have taught us to call the evening, the morning, and the noonday one day; and have made the sun to know its going down: Dispel the darkness of our hearts, that by your brightness we may know you to be the true God and eternal light, living and reigning forever and ever. Amen.

CONFESSION & ASSURANCE of PARDON

If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. But if we confess our sins, God, who is faithful and just, will forgive our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. *1 John 1: 8-9*

Let us then confess our sins against God and our fellow sisters and brothers.

Most merciful God, we confess that we have sinned against you
in thought, word, and deed,
by what we have done, and by what we have left undone.
We have not loved you with our whole heart;
we have not loved our neighbors as ourselves.
We are truly sorry and we humbly repent.
For the sake of your Son Jesus Christ, have mercy on us and forgive us;
that we may delight in your will, and walk in your ways,
to the glory of your Name. Amen.

Almighty God have mercy on us, forgive our sins through our savior Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, strengthen us in all goodness, ✚ and keep us in eternal life. Amen.

Listen now to familiar words of the prophet Isaiah.

FIRST READING

Isaiah 40:1-5, 11

Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that she has served her term, that her penalty is paid, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins. A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken."

He will feed his flock like a shepherd; he will gather the lambs in his arms, and carry them in his bosom, and gently lead the mother sheep.

Here ends the Reading.

GRADUAL

Psalm 80: 1-3

Hear, O Shepherd of Israel, leading Joseph like a flock; *
shine forth, you that are enthroned upon the cherubim.
In the presence of Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh, *
stir up your strength and come to help us.
Restore us, O God of hosts; *
show the light of your countenance, and we shall be saved.

SECOND READING

from Luke 1: 26-38

In the sixth month [of Elizabeth's pregnancy with John] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin engaged to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Greetings, favored one! The Lord is with you." But she was much perplexed by his words and pondered what sort of greeting this might be.

The angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his ancestor David. He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "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 holy; he will be called Son of God. And now, your relative Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month for her who was said to be barren. For nothing will be impossible with God." Then Mary said, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Then the angel departed from her.

Here ends the Reading.

MEDITATION

(due to the length of the video, it may be abbreviated)
check out The Geranium Farm, www.geraniumfarm.org

“ANNUNCIATION”

by Mother Barbara Cawthorne Crafton

(used with permission, 11-20-2020)

Mary was sitting in the garden behind her house. She sat alone. She was thinking. She had been spending a lot of time alone lately, thinking about what was going to happen. For something important was about to happen to her.

She was going to be married. Her parents had just told her. She had never met Joseph, the man who was going to be her husband. Where Mary lived, girls didn't speak to men who were not their fathers or brothers. Never. It was not allowed. And when it was time for a girl to get married -- when she was thirteen or fourteen -- her parents decided who she would marry.

She was thinking about what it would be like. She would have to leave her mother and father. She would have to leave all her cousins. She wouldn't be able to live in her own house any more. She hoped Joseph had a sister or something, or a girl cousin. She hoped his mother was nice. Mary's mother was her best friend. She looked up into the tamarind tree and her eyes filled with tears. She used to climb that tree when she was a little girl.

She had even climbed it a few weeks ago, and her cousin Elizabeth caught a glimpse of her out the window.

“Come down from there this minute, miss! You’re too old to climb trees now. It’s time to act like a lady, now that she was grown up enough to be married.”

"Couldn't we wait a while? A couple of years, maybe? And then I could get married?"

Anna had reached for her daughter and held her close, stroking Mary's lovely black hair. Her eyes were brown like Mary's, and they looked now into the space just above Mary's head, at nothing in particular. She was thinking, too. Remembering. Anna had been thirteen when she married Mary's father. She hadn't wanted to leave home, either.

"Now, now, we'll visit back and forth. And then I'll come and help you with all your babies. You'll have, oh, I don't know, twenty-seven babies, maybe...?"

Anna was teasing.

(smiling a little). "*Thirty-seven.*"

"You'll be too busy to miss Mama."

"No, I won't." Mary's lip trembled and her eyes filled with tears again. She pressed her face against her mother's chest and breathed in deeply through her nose. She loved the way her mother smelled. She didn't want to go and live with Joseph or anybody else. She wanted to stay home.

"It's because of the census, you know," Anna said. "Joseph has to go to Bethlehem and give an accounting of his family, and you're going to be part of his family. So he has to take you, too."

"The census is stupid. Counting people is stupid. What good is counting people?"

"Well, I guess the Romans like to count things," Anna said, giving Mary an extra hug and standing up. "Now, I'm going to go back inside and start supper. Are you going to help me or shall I make fifteen loaves of pita all by myself?"

"I'll be there in just a minute."

The sun was nearer to the horizon now, and it slanted through the leaves of the tamarind tree, making pools of golden light on the stone floor. The tamarinds hung from the branches all over the tree, plump and tempting. Later afternoon was a beautiful time.

"You don't have to get married, you know," a voice said.

Mary looked around. Nobody was there.

"Who's there?"

"I'm up here." The voice was coming from the tree.

Mary looked up. Something glowing was perched in the spot where Mary usually sat when she climbed the tamarind.

"Who are you?"

"My name is Gabriel."

"I'm Mary."

"I know."

"How do you know about me? And that I'm getting married?"

"I just know." the glow settled itself in the notch between the two branches. "You don't have to, you know. You can just say no."

"I can?"

"Sure. Nobody ever has to do anything. They can always say no."

"But my parents chose Joseph for me. They know me. They do what's best for me."

"Yes, they do."

Mary was silent for a moment. The glowing thing in the tree was hard to see; she couldn't tell if it was a person or had a body like hers.

"Elizabeth's parents chose for her."

"Yes. By the way, I have a secret about Elizabeth."

"A secret?"

"Yes. She's going to have a baby."

"Elizabeth? But she thought she couldn't have babies! She's been married for so long and no baby ever came."

"Well, she's having one now. I have another secret."

"You do?"

"Yes."

"Well, what is it?"

"You're going to have one, too."

"Well, I hope so! At least one! More than that, I hope. I always tell people I'm going to have thirty-seven."

"Well, I only know about the One."

"Really?" Mary wasn't sure whether or not to believe Gabriel, but she daydreamed about babies all the time. "Boy or girl?"

"Boy."

"Oh." Mary wanted a girl, but that was all right. She could have a girl next time. Surely a few of the thirty-seven babies would be girls. Besides, where Mary lived, people always wanted to have a boy first. Probably Joseph would want a boy.

"Do you know Joseph, too?"

"Yes. I come to him in dreams."

"Not trees?"

"I come to you in trees."

"You're pretty funny." Mary leaned closer to the glow. "What is Joseph like?"

"He is a good man. He is quiet and gentle. He is strong. He will be good to you."

"Well, is he handsome?"

"I think you're all beautiful. But I came to talk about the baby."

"What baby?"

"The one you're going to have. This is happening soon, Mary. Not years from now, but now."

"Now? I'm thirteen!"

"Your little boy is going to be like other little boys, but also not like them. You will know this as soon as he is born, although you won't understand what it means for years. Things will happen throughout his life that will let you know that he is different."

"Like what?"

"You will know. Stay alert and you will see."

"But I don't see. Different how?"

"You're all God's children. But this baby will be the Son of God. And you will be His mother."

"The Son of God?"

"He'll be the king."

"Like King Herod? No thanks." King Herod was a terrible king.

"Nothing like King Herod. Your baby will be like no other person who has ever lived."

"So this is why I'm getting married now? But you said I didn't have to get married. If I'm going to have a baby, hadn't I'd better hurry up?"

"You don't have to do any of this, Mary." Gabriel said. "You can always say no. Or...you can be part of God's adventure."

Mary thought. She thought of her mother at her age, setting off on the same path with Mary's father. She thought of Elizabeth, wishing for a baby and never having one, and how she was going to have one now. That was strange.

She thought of this old tree, her companion throughout childhood, and that nothing glowing had ever sat in it and talked to her before.

She thought of a baby boy, when she wanted a girl, and she felt the tiniest bit of excitement begin. She would go to Bethlehem. She would meet Joseph's sisters. She would see things she had never seen. Joseph was kind. Joseph had big hands, strong hands from being a carpenter. Gabriel was an angel. Her baby was a king, wearing a crown....

"Miss Mary, are you ever coming in to help me with supper?" It was her mother. "I knew you'd fallen asleep out here!"

Mary looked up in the tree. It was empty. The sun was almost down, and the lamps were lit inside. Yes, she said in her mind, not with her lips. Yes. I'll do it. I'll be part of the adventure. Be it to me according to thy will.

*The Almost-Daily eMo from the Geranium Farm
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Let us offer the words of our faith using the Apostles' Creed.

The CREED

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord.

He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit
and born of the Virgin Mary.

He suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried.

He descended to the dead.

On the third day he rose again.

He ascended into heaven, and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again to judge the living and the dead.
I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection † of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

PRAYERS, Form II, *adapted*

BCP, p.385

I ask your prayers for God's people throughout the world; for Justin, the Archbishop of Canterbury; Michael, our Presiding Bishop; Kevin, our Bishop; and for all ministers and faithful. Pray for the Church.

Silence

I ask your prayers for peace; for goodwill among nations; and for the well-being of all people. Pray for justice and peace at home and abroad.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the poor, the hungry, the oppressed, those in prison, those separated from loved ones, for the sick, and especially the elderly and those suffering from Covid-19 symptoms. Pray for those in any need or trouble.

Silence

I ask your prayers for the departed, especially those who have succumbed to the virus, and those killed by violent acts. Pray for those who have died.

Silence

I ask your thanksgiving for loved ones, and the creative ways they and we have found to share our love. Pray for our families wherever they may be.

Silence

To sum up all these petitions, let us pray together in the words which Christ himself taught us, saying:

Our Father...

BLESSING

The Lord bless us and keep us
The Lord make his face to shine upon us,
and be gracious to us.
The Lord lift his countenance upon us, and give us peace. *Amen.*

In our various ways, let us go forth and proclaim to the world the love of God as has been made known to us. Alleluia, alleluia!

Oh, and happy St. Nicholas Day!

(attached is information from
Lesser Feasts and Fasts)

Organ Postlude -

“The angel Gabriel”

Basque carol, Hymn #265
setting by John Rutter

December 6
St. Nicholas
Bishop of Myra, died c. 342

Very little is known about the life of Nicholas, except that he suffered torture and imprisonment during the persecution under the Emperor Diocletian. It is possible that he was one of the bishops attending the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325. He was honored as a saint in Constantinople in the sixth century by the Emperor Justinian. His veneration became immensely popular in the West after the supposed removal of his body to Bari, Italy, in the late eleventh century. In England almost 400 churches were dedicated to him.

Nicholas is famed as the traditional patron of seafarers and sailors, and, more especially, of children. As a bearer of gifts to children, his name was brought to America by the Dutch colonists in New York, from whom he is popularly known as Santa Claus.

Collect for the feast of St. Nicholas

Almighty God, in your love you gave your servant Nicholas of Myra a perpetual name for deeds of kindness both on land and sea: Grant, we pray, that your Church may never cease to work for the happiness of children, the safety of sailors, the relief of the poor, and the help of those tossed by tempests of doubt or grief; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever. *Amen.*