

Weekly Update from Fr. John Allison 11-30-17

Dear members and friends of our parish family,

This week we mourn the loss of two members of our parish family: Margaret Delehanty and Gary Stanley. Though I had the privilege of knowing Margaret only briefly before her passing and regretfully never had the opportunity to meet Gary, I join with you in expressing sadness that they are no longer with us and thanksgiving for the legacy of love and faithfulness that each left behind in their own very unique ways. I ask for your continued prayers and offer here a favorite prayer from our BCP:

*O God of grace and glory, we remember before you this day our sister Margaret and our brother Gary. We thank you for giving them to us, their family and friends, to know and love as companions on our earthly pilgrimage. In your boundless compassion, console us who mourn. Give us faith to see in death the gate of eternal life, so that in quiet confidence we may continue our coarse on earth, until by your call, we are reunited with those who have gone before; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.*

This first Sunday of Advent we begin our journey to the light of the Incarnation. Our readings begin the new liturgical year by announcing the Biblical expectation of the coming of God. Our reading from Isaiah (64:1-9) responds to the sense of disorientation felt by the Israelites following their conquest by the Babylonians and the subsequent destruction of the First Temple. It is a direct appeal to God to intervene in what seems a hopeless situation and serves to echo our own sense of longing for God to be present in the face of darkness. The theme is continued in our Gospel reading from Mark (13:24-37) when Jesus details for his disciples the events preceding his return and God's final judgement. Generally thought to be the earliest of the Gospels and likely written just prior to the destruction of the Temple by the Romans, Mark offers for his readers an account of the end times directly consistent with the Jewish expectation of the coming final judgement. Much as our readings from Matthew over the past three weeks pointed us to Christ's return and our need to be ready, Mark combines several of the same themes: the glorious return of the Son of Man (Jesus), the need to read the signs of the times to discern when the time is near, the impossibility of predicting the exact day and hour, and the consequent need to watch, pray, and be ready at all times. Paul's First letter to the Corinthians highlights, in particular, the need to be ready and offers the assurance that we lack nothing in the grace of God through Christ. As you ponder these readings leading up to Sunday I invite you to consider how you prepare for Christ's coming and what it means to be awake in expectation of the Incarnation.

Also important to note as we embark on a new season are some subtle changes to our liturgy. First is the inclusion of the Advent Wreath, comprising four candles around the outer edge of the wreath and a single Christ candle in the center. The circle of the wreath reminds us that Christ has no beginning and no end; the evergreens represent the promise of eternal life and ever-growing faith; the candles represent Jesus' overcoming of the darkness of hatred and evil with the light of joy and love. Secondly, be aware that during the season of Advent we will be using Eucharistic Prayer B. It's reference to the prophets, emphasis on the Incarnation, and it's concluding emphasis on the final revelation of Christ make it quite suitable for the Advent season. Our Eucharist this Sunday will be offered in memory of Signey Frye. Additionally we welcome as our special musical guests, the Trillium Trio: Fred Benson, Andrea Horner, and Linda Soukup.

Finally, I want to remind you that during the season of Advent we will follow a modified Sunday schedule: 8:30 Morning Prayer; 9-9:45 Advent Study; 10 Eucharist. I look forward to seeing you all then.

Faithfully,

John+