

Reflection - Advent Longing

But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. (2 Pt 3:13)

Pierre Teilhard de Chardin once suggested that peace and justice will come to us when we reach a high enough psychic temperature so as to burn away the things that still hold us apart. In saying this, he was drawing upon a principle in chemistry: sometimes two elements will simply lie side by side inside a test-tube and not unite until sufficient heat is applied so as to bring them to a high enough temperature where unity can take place. That’s a wonderful metaphor for Advent.

What is Advent?

Advent is about getting in touch with our longing. It’s about letting our yearnings raise our psychic temperatures so that we are pushed to eventually let down our guard, hope in new ways, and risk intimacy.

John of the Cross has a similar image: intimacy with God and with each other will only take place, he says, when we reach a certain kindling temperature. For too much of our lives, he suggests, we lie around as damp, green logs inside the fire of love, waiting to come to flame but never bursting into flame because of our dampness. Before we can burst into flame, we must first dry out and come to kindling temperature. We do that by first sizzling for a long time in the flames, as does a damp log inside a fire, so as to dry out.

How do we sizzle psychologically and spiritually? For John of the Cross, we do that through the pain of loneliness, restlessness, disquiet, anxiety, frustration, and unrequited desire. In the torment of incompleteness our psychic temperature rises so that eventually we come to kindling temperature and, there, we finally open ourselves to union in new ways. That too is an image for Advent. Advent is all about loneliness, but loneliness is a complex thing.

Nobel Prize winning author, Toni Morrison describes it this way:
There is a loneliness that can be rocked. Arms crossed, knees drawn up, holding, holding on, this motion, unlike a ship’s, smoothes and contains the rocker. It’s an inside kind—wrapped tight like skin. Then there is a loneliness that roams. No rocking can hold it down. It is alive, on its own. A dry and spreading thing that makes the sound of one’s own feet going seems to come from a far-off place. (from Beloved).

All of us know exactly what she is describing, especially the latter type, the roaming kind of loneliness that haunts the soul and makes us, all too often, too restless to sleep at night and too uncomfortable to be inside our own skins during the day. And what’s the lesson in this? What we learn from loneliness is that we comprise more than any one moment in our lives, more than any situation we are in, more than any humiliation we have experienced, more than any rejection we have endured, and more than all the limits within which we find ourselves. Loneliness and longing take us beyond ourselves. How?

Thomas Aquinas once taught that we can attain something in one of two ways: through possession or through desire. We like to possess what we love, but that isn’t often possible and it has an underside. Possession is limited, desire is infinite. Possession sets up fences, desire takes down fences. To quote Karl Rahner, only in the torment of the insufficiency of everything attainable do we know that we are more than the limits of our bodies, our present relationships, our jobs, our achievements, and the concrete situations within which we live, work, and die. Loneliness and longing let us touch, through desire, God’s ultimate design for us. In our longing, the mystics tell us, we intuit the kingdom of God. What that means is that in our desires we sense the deeper blueprint for things.

And what is that?

Scripture tells us that the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking, of simple bodily pleasure, but a coming together in justice, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, that is what we ache for in our loneliness and longing: consummation, oneness, intimacy, completeness, harmony, peace, and justice. Sometimes, of course, in our fantasies and daydreams, that isn’t so evident.

God’s kingdom seems something much loftier and more holy than what we often long for—sex, revenge, fame, power, glory, pleasure. However even in these fantasies, be they ever so crass, there is present always a deeper desire, for justice, for peace, for joy, for oneness in Christ.

Our loneliness and longing are a hunger and an energy that drive us, always, beyond the present moment. In them we do intuit the kingdom of God. Advent is about longing, about getting in touch with it, about heightening it, about letting it raise our psychic temperatures, about sizzling as damp green logs inside the fires of intimacy, about intuiting the kingdom of God by seeing, through desire, what the world might look like if a Messiah were to come and establish with us justice, peace, and unity on this earth.

Ron Rothesier

St Thomas Aquinas Parish Bulletin



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Parish Priest: Fr Paul Slyney - 4754 1052 Emergency ONLY: 0418 461 316
Assistant Priest: Fr Shinto Francis - 4754 1052 Emergency ONLY: 0415 077 969
Parish Pastoral Council: Email - springwoodppc@gmail.com
Parish Office Hours: Tuesday to Friday 8.30 am - 3.30 pm

Weekend Masses: Saturday Vigil Mass 5.00 pm, Sunday 8.00 am and 9.30 am
Weekday Mass: Tuesday - Saturday 9.30 am

Rosary & Devotions: Tuesday - Saturday 9.00 am
Adoration, Rosary & Chaplet: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 7.30 - 8.30 pm
Intercession & Adoration: None until further notice

Baptisms: 2nd and 4th Sundays of every month - 10.30am and by appointment
Reconciliation: By request
Weddings: By appointment - restricted numbers
Funerals: By appointment - restricted numbers

THE GOSPEL

2 Peter 3:8-14

But according to his promise we await new heavens and a new earth.

O God,
a thousand years
are like a day
for you.

To us
one day can seem
like a thousand
years!

When
will you
come again?

Please
do not delay.
Touch our
hearts.

Be our grace
every single
second,
our grace
and our
peace!

Anne M. Osdieck

Today’s Readings: **SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT, Year B** Is 40:1-5, 9-11; 2 Pet 3:8-14; Mk 1:1-8
Entrance Antiphon: O people of Sion, behold, the Lord will come to save the nations, and the Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart.
Responsorial Psalm: Ps 84:9-14. R. v. 8
R. Lord, let us see your kindness, and grant us your salvation.
Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, Alleluia! Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths: all people shall see the salvation of God. Alleluia!
Communion Antiphon: Jerusalem, arise and stand upon the heights, and behold the joy which comes to you from God.
Next Week: Is 61:1-2, 10-11; 1 Thess 5:16-24; Jn 1:6-8, 19-28



Recently Deceased: Noreen Russell

Sick: Victor Gresser (aged 2), Mary Ellen Schell, Joan Eastwood, Gwen Daly, Angela Brown, Patricia Duffy, Lorna Lyons, Lucinda Goodwin, Leila Baker, Mary Coombs, Luca Hurley, Shirley Anderson, Val Hardy, Thomas Glavas and all Private Intentions.

Due to the strict privacy laws, names of the deceased and sick can only be included in the Bulletin with the express permission of the immediate family. Thank you.

Please Note: *Our sick list will re-start in 2021 with no names. If you wish to have a relative placed on to the sick list in January/February, please advise the Parish office.*

THE WEARING OF MASKS - The Diocese of Parramatta **STRONGLY recommends all worshippers at Masses** in the Diocese to wear a mask to, during and from Mass and other services. We sincerely thank you for your understanding, and for playing your part in keeping our community safe. **We request that as we move to larger Masses, that you please bring along your own Mask to Mass. Thank you.**

ST VINCENT DE PAUL SOCIETY - This is the time of year when the St Vincent de Paul Society members ask Parishioners to support families in need by providing Christmas Hampers or cash to purchase fruit and vegetable vouchers. Envelopes for your donations are available on the table near Our Lady's statue and conference members will be at weekend Masses until Sunday 13th December. If your family feels able to provide a hampers that would be wonderful. Many thanks for your ongoing support to Vinnies and the people we support.

HOUSES TO HOMES — **St Thomas Aquinas Parish Christmas Appeal.** In Partnership with CatholicCare we are appealing to our Parishioners to help support young mothers and babies through the Houses to Homes program. This amazing service is for pregnant girls or parenting young women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. The demand for this program has grown and we would like to be able to present Houses to Homes with practical gifts i.e. nappies, wipes, baby clothes, small children's toys (please not used toys due to COVID-19 regulations), toiletry items for women etc. Please place your items under the Christmas Tree from Advent. Thank you.

IMMACULATA MISSION SCHOOL 2021 – **5 days of Prayer, Adoration, talks, daily Mass, community friendship, recreation, praise and worship.** Featuring talks from Archbishop Julian Porteous, Fr Bob Galea, The Sisters of the Immaculata and Lay Community, Paul Elarde, James Parker plus more! Cost is \$220pp with basic shared accommodation, \$170pp with no accommodation. Includes food, speakers, activities and youth & children's ministry. Register at sistersoftheimmaculata.org.au/ims, phone 0406 372 608 or email immaculatamissionschool@gmail.com.

BISHOP'S CHRISTMAS APPEAL - This Christmas, let us unite in demonstrating God's unconditional love and keep families together. Your compassionate gifts and prayers will help CatholicCare's Project Elizabeth to support vulnerable families to build strong, loving relationships. You can help give people the emotional and practical support they need to live their lives in love and hope. Please give generously to the Bishop's Christmas Appeal: yourcatholicfoundation.org.au/appeal
Envelopes are available at the back of the church. Please place into the first collection box if you wish to donate. Thank you.

A Message from Fr Shinto

Dear Friends,

My name is Shinto Francis and I have been a priest for almost three years. Thank you for welcoming me into your community.

I have felt God calling me to priesthood from a very young age. Starting from when I turned 15 years, I spent thirteen years in seminary formation studying Philosophy, Theology, and Law. I also spent a few years working. All these years, the invisible hand of the Spirit of God guided, protected, and confirmed to me that my calling is to minister to God and His people.

During my studies in the Holy Spirit Seminary, Parramatta, I ministered at Padre Pio Parish, Glenmore Park, and at St Paul the Apostle Parish Winston Hills, as a transitional deacon. I was ordained a priest by Bishop Vincent Long on the 16th of December 2017 at St Patrick's Cathedral, in Parramatta. Following my ordination, I was assigned at St Bernadette's Parish in Castle Hill as an Assistant Priest.

I would like to recognise the lives of simplicity and genuine dedication of many priests and faithful I have encountered in Australia, which have largely influenced my decision to pursue a call to priesthood. I am truly excited to join our amazing parish community, and I hope I can count on your valuable prayers and support for my ministry in our community. I am looking forward to meeting you all and becoming a part of our community.

CHRISTMAS MASS TIMES 2020:

	Springwood	Lawson (OLN)
Christmas Eve, Thurs 24th Dec	5.00pm Children's Mass ** 8.00pm VIGIL	5.00pm Children's Mass 8.00pm VIGIL
Christmas Day, Fri 25th Dec	8.00am, 9.30am	8.00am, 9.00am
Boxing Day, Sat 26 Dec	9.30am Communion Mass/Rosary	No Mass
Sun 27th December	8.00am, 9.30am	8.30am
Tues 29th, Wed 30th Dec	9.30am	5.00pm
Thurs 31st Dec	9.30am	9.00am
Fri 1st January	9.30am	

5pm Children's Mass will be held under the covered area at St Thomas Aquinas Primary School.
Please bring along a chair or picnic blanket to sit on.

Normal safety protocols will be in place. You must sign in upon entry through the gates of the school.

**** 8pm Vigil Mass will be held in the Church.**

Booking for Christmas Masses:

We have started to take bookings for all Christmas Masses as we are anticipating large numbers.
Please either ring or email the Parish as soon as possible to guarantee your place.

Ph: 4754 1052 / E: springwood@parracatholic.org

The 2nd Rite of Reconciliation has been scheduled for Tuesday, 22nd December at
7:00 PM

Fr Paul and Fr Shinto will be present on the evening

The Sacrament of Penance, at this time during Advent, is an ideal way of remaining focused on the beautiful spirituality of Christmas.

Thank you from Fr Michael Gathuku

Dear St Thomas Aquinas Parish Community,

Thank you Fr Paul, Chris, Debbie, all of the Acolytes, the Parish Council, church helpers, readers and the St Thomas Aquinas Parish community for the lovely farewell gifts, wishes and prayers.

I loved serving each and every one of you and will miss your smiles and friendly chats. I will pray for you from Our Lady of the Way for a happy, healthy and prosperous Christmas.

With the blessings of peace, the spirit of love, the comfort of faith, I wish you all a wonderful New Year.
God bless you all,

Fr Michael