

PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS



Christmas Trees, Carols & Our Attempts at Advent

By Michele Chronister

'Tis the season for debates about how to properly celebrate Advent. The stores have all been decorated since the day after Halloween. Your neighbors had their tree decorated the week before Thanksgiving. What should you be doing?

On the other end of the spectrum, you have people who refuse to play Christmas carols until Christmas day, and who decorate their trees on Christmas Eve. Their approach is one intended to counter the secular world's crush into Christmas.

Liturgically speaking, Advent is a time of waiting and preparation for Christmas. In some ways, a Catholic could embrace either approach, if done in the right spirit. It isn't for nothing, after all, that Catholicism is said to be the religion of "both and".

In order to celebrate Advent properly, we have to reflect on Christmas. What is Christmas, but the celebration of the birth of a child? What does a time of waiting and preparation for any baby look like? Well, some families will have the crib assembled by twenty weeks into the pregnancy, and the nursery decorated and ready to go before the end of the second trimester. Other moms go into labor and realize, "Shoot. I really should have set up the crib already. Do we have diapers?" Despite a difference in approach, both mothers will have prepared for the arrival of her baby, simply by the nature of pregnancy.

Those who adopt a child, experience similar extremes — the foster child whose arrival you only knew about hours prior, and the child halfway around the world for whom you've been preparing for months. Every family waits and prepares differently. There isn't really a wrong way to wait or prepare.

But no matter how much or how little you prepare... does any of it take away from the sheer awe you experience when you hold your child for the first time? I have given birth to three daughters, and have prepared for each of them for months before. No amount of preparation prepared me for the moment I first laid eyes on them. They left me breathless and in love. That awe — the awe of laying eyes on the child I have prayed and longed for —

doesn't end within 24 hours. It only intensifies as time goes on. And in the first few weeks after her birth, I am reeling with awe and overwhelmed at the newness of this little person.

Eventually, life returns to normal, but my love of her and my desire to know her only increases with time. In some ways, although it is good that I spent time and energy preparing for the birth of my child, it all feels a little bit silly after the fact.

The sleeping arrangement I have planned never seem to work for that particular baby, and we're moving cribs and setting up bed rails and popping up port-a-cribs. I have my nursing pillow out and ready to feed the new baby, and then find out that this child struggles to latch and breastfeed and I really should have cleaned my breast pump and bought some new bottles instead or a new nursing pillow cover. But more than the practical aspects, there is the simple fact that there is no way to prepare for *who* my child will be. That child is a mystery. This is what Advent and Christmas should look like.



We can debate when the Christmas tree should be set up and decorated, whether or not to do gifts on St. Nicholas Day, etc. but that doesn't matter as much as *how* we're doing our preparation. The *how* matters more than the *what*. Advent is meant to be a time of preparing our hearts, as best as we can, for the Christ child to come and enter there. We light our candles, we set up our Jesse tree, we open the windows on the Advent calendar, and we decorate our homes. We may even listen to some Christmas carols, to get ourselves in the Christmas mood. We even go to Confession, and then we think, *Now I'm ready*.

But if we do Advent right, we should still be struck with awe when that Christmas liturgy actually begins. For all our preparations and plans, we are suddenly struck dumb by the mystery of this real, actual baby. Mary has had her baby, and he is so much more than what we expected. He isn't just any baby, this little Messiah. This baby is *God become flesh*. And the great and almighty God became flesh for love of us.

www.catholicexchange.com

PARISH DIRECTORY

Parish Council

Crystal Lynch
crystallynch2000@gmail.com

Finance Council

Lauri Ann Fenlon
lauri.ann.fenlon@gmail.com

Parish Education Committee

Renee Stafford
pec@olphbc.ca

COORDINATORS

Altar Guild

Bridget Bird 604-228-9180

Altar Servers

Kate Carr 604-730-5640

Catholic Women's League

Lynn MacDonald
bob.lynn.macdonald@gmail.com

Children's Liturgy

Kathy Mok
communications.olph@rcav.org

Craft Group

Doris Rankin 604-224-0876

Development & Peace

William Wingson 778-866-8504

Eucharistic Ministry

Pamela Brammall 604-228-9206

Food Bank

Robyn Sirmul robynsirmul@shaw.ca

Hospitality Ministry

Gerry Macken 604-222-1369

Knights of Columbus

Peter Dodge 604-222-0791

Library

Katherine Hill
kathswim2012@gmail.com

Liturgy of the Hours

Bridget Clark 604-228-8773

Madonna Group

Monica Cheung 604-739-8837

Ministry of the Word

Roger Poirier 604-224-0426

Music Ministry

Catherine Walsh
catherine.organist@gmail.com

Pastoral Care

Mary Thompson 604-263-6008

PREP

Elizabeth Towers 604-440-8809

Project Advance

Bertilla Watanabe 604-224-4344

RCIA

Bertilla Watanabe
bwatanabe@rcav.org

Social Justice/St. Vincent de Paul

Mark Thompson 778-891-6275

Volunteers Coordinator

Lara Garcia Carton
olphchurchvolunteers@gmail.com

Weddings

Fr. Babu Mathew
604-224-4344



OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP PARISH

December 3, 2017

1st Sunday of Advent

MASSES & SERVICES

Saturday: 5pm
(Anticipated Mass)
Sunday: 9am, 11am & 5pm
Monday – Wednesday 8am
Thursday Mass/Novena:
8am & 7pm
Friday, Saturday, Holidays:
9am
(Fridays in July & August:
8am)
Reconciliation
Saturday: 4-4:45pm
Adoration
Saturday 9:30-10am
Library Hours
Sunday: 10-10:45am, 4:30-5pm

OFFICE HOURS

Monday-Friday: 9am-4pm

STAFF

Pastor

Babu Mathew, C.Ss.R.

Associate Pastor

Joseph Horo, C.Ss.R.

Office Manager

Virginia Fong

Pastoral Coordinator

Bertilla Watanabe

Bookkeeper

Corinna Siy

Youth Ministry Coordinator

Theresa Barao

OLPH School Principal

Lora Clarke

IN RESIDENCE

William Comerford, C.Ss.R.

CONTACT

Email: parish.olph@rcav.org
Website: www.olphchurch.ca
Parish Office: 604-224-4344
OLPH School: 604-228-8811
Jr. Kindergarten: 604-221-0002

 [Olphchurchvancouver](https://www.facebook.com/olphchurchvancouver)

OLPH Church, 2465 Crown
Street, Vancouver BC V6R3V9

Advent: A Time for Looking Forward and Looking Back

Dear Friends & Parishioners,

Advent is a very exciting time of the year. It is a time of looking ahead and looking back, of considering the world we live in and the world beyond. In Advent, we look back upon Christ's coming in celebration while at the same time looking forward in eager anticipation to the coming of Christ's kingdom when he returns for his people.

Not surprisingly, the idea most of us associate with Advent is the coming of Jesus at Christmas, recalling his birth at Bethlehem. Even though we are to spend our time in contemplation of the coming of the Christ child, most of us cannot help but get caught up in the eager anticipation of Christmas. It would be particularly helpful if we could set aside some time of family prayer during this season to calm our spirits in the busyness of this season.

The other meaning of Advent captures the present situation of the Church in these "last days" as God's people wait for the return of Christ in glory to consummate his eternal kingdom. You will be hearing more about this in the Mass readings in the weeks ahead. The church is in a similar situation to Israel at the end of the Old Testament: in exile, waiting and hoping in prayerful expectation for the coming of the Messiah.

This weekend the official light-up of the Church will take place and I am guessing our wonderful volunteers will bring us some pre-Christmas cookies! Our choirs have also been working on some beautiful Advent music which capture the spirit of this liturgical season. The program is called, "Christ Be Our Light." Here is a little sampling of the readings for the Advent Concert by Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen.

"There are two births of Christ: One unto the world in Bethlehem, the other in the soul where Jesus is spiritually reborn. We often think of the first Bethlehem and celebrate it every year much more than the second. But the spiritual Bethlehem is equally momentous... it is the one in which Jesus is born in our hearts."

Let us pray that our Blessed Mother may help us to recognize that Advent is not just a sentimental exercise but a true journey of conversion. A Penitential Service is being held today at 2pm to help us prepare our hearts for Christmas.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Babu Mathew, C.Ss.R



Restore us O God; let your face shine, that we may be saved. - Psalm 80

NEWS & NOTICES

Advent Penitential Service: Prepare for Christmas by receiving the sacrament of Reconciliation today, Sunday, at 2pm.

PEC Meeting: Tuesday Dec 12 in the Madonna Room at 7pm. Parishioners are welcome to attend.

Andrew Hong Memorial Fund: Thank you for all of your offers of support for the Hong family at this difficult time following the passing of husband and father, Andrew Hong. If you would like to help Cecilia Cho and her children, Taehyunh, Tara and Tristan, please see below for a link to a Go Fund Me page. In addition, you may drop off any financial gifts to the parish or school office. Please make any cheques payable to Cecilia Cho. <https://www.gofundme.com/andrew-hong-memorial-fund>

Seniors Christmas Tea & Concert: This is an annual event put on by OLPH School. Seniors of the parish and grandparents of school are invited to attend the noon performance to be held on Wednesday Dec 20 12-2pm. Tickets are available early Dec. at the school office. Seating is limited.

CWL Christmas Fair Message: Thank you to all who volunteered time with set up, decorating, and volunteering on the day. Thank you to all who baked, made sandwiches, and donated treasures, books, crafts, baking and sandwiches. Thank you to all who supported the event by coming out and enjoying tea and purchasing goods. Thanks to the Knights who took charge of the raffle and congratulations to all the prize winners. A special thank you to Santa who made an early visit from the North Pole. It was a successful parish event. – Lynn MacDonald

World Premiere of *In the Spirit of Reconciliation* Film: We are pleased to invite you and a guest to the World Premiere of *In The Spirit of Reconciliation* at SFU Goldcorp's Centre for the Arts on Wednesday, Dec. 6, at 7 p.m. The screening will be followed by a panel discussion and Q&A with director Larry Lynn, Bishop Gary Gordon (Bishop of Victoria and former Bishop of Whitehorse, Yukon) and Monique Sabourin, Dene Elder and residential school survivor. Please RSVP at www.reconciliation.film/contact to have your name added to the rapidly expanding guest list as we have limited capacity.

ONE Conference 2018: The annual ONE Conference brings 1,000 parish and ministry leaders from across Catholic Vancouver together to connect, learn, and inspire each other. Mercy and Beyond: Sharing our Joy is the theme of the 2018 ONE Conference, and we will hear from two remarkable keynote speakers who have inspired thousands of people to receive God's mercy and share his joy with others. Sign up to get notified when registration opens at onecatholic.ca. The ONE Conference will be on Saturday, Feb. 10, 2018, at the Chandos Pattison Auditorium at Pacific Academy, Surrey. rcav.org/event/one-2018/

Project Advance: As of end November, donations were at \$79,762. We only have 4 weeks left to the end of the year to hit our target of \$102,000. Please make a prayerful consideration towards giving to this year's Appeal. Thank you!

Development & Peace Membership Drive: This year is the 50th anniversary of the formation of Development & Peace. To celebrate our jubilee, we are offering free membership!

Be at the heart of change, become a member to:

- Learn about injustice and what you can do about it.
- Take concrete actions in solidarity with the poorest and most vulnerable people of the Global South.
- Join a dynamic cross-Canada movement for global peace and justice.
- Speak out! When we act together, change is possible.

Sign up online at www.devp.org or email Deirdre Webster for more info, dmswebster@gmail.com.

Ministering to Seafarers at the Port of Vancouver: The Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) provides pastoral care to the crew of cargo ships that dock in Vancouver, Canada's largest seaport. We ask for your prayers in support of this ministry. There is ongoing need for volunteers to visit ships, to drive seafarers to local malls, and to caringly associate with them at the Seafarers Mission Centres in downtown Vancouver and Roberts Bank (South Delta). For more information on volunteering, please contact Deacon Dileep Athaide, Catholic Chaplaincy Coordinator for the Port of Vancouver, at 604-817-6370 or at dathaide@rcav.org.

Stewardship Reflection

"Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come." - MARK 13:33

We all take things for granted. In particular, we take time for granted. Our lives are so busy, many of us are planning our time – our days, weeks, months, even years in advance. Remember, our time on earth is a gift. None of us knows how long we will be here. Start today and begin thanking God for each and every day. Take time in silence, every day, and listen to what God is saying to you.

Stewardship Office, Archdiocese of St. Louis

CALENDAR

DECEMBER

Santa's Workshop



This Christmas, we are reaching out again to underprivileged families of Lord Strathcona Community School. Join us on Sunday December 10 after the 11am Mass to pack donated items from the Giving Tree. We need helpers to pack boxes and serve food on Sunday and deliver boxes on Monday. To prep for this event, please save cardboard boxes 12"x12"x12" up to 3'x3'x3' and drop them off at the parish office before Dec 2. Volunteer sign-up sheets are in the foyer. Thank you.

Door Is Open



The next Door Is Open Outreach to the folks of the Eastside is on Tuesday Dec 5. About 20 volunteers are needed. Sign-up sheets are in the foyer. Thank you!

Socks for Cold Feet

On Dec 9 & 10, the OLPH Conference of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul will be collecting socks to give to people who really need this small bit of comfort. Socks will also be available before and after all Masses to purchase by cash donation. In past years, our socks have been handed out from the SSVF Outreach Truck in the DTES to the Men's Hostel, at the Door Is Open, the Extreme Weather Program and to people sleeping in doorways in our own neighbourhood.

So Many Opportunities to Serve This Advent

As we have done in recent years, our parish is reaching out to the disadvantaged through a few organizations in different ways to bring a little Christmas cheer.

The results of the 2016 Point-in-Time Homeless Count found that the number of people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver has ranged between just under 1,600 to just over 1,800 between 2010 and 2016 (1,847 in 2015). Since 2005, the general trend for the homeless count shows a slight increase across the period and those who did not have shelter in 2016 on the night of the count has remained relatively stable over the last three counts at 539 for 2016, demonstrating ongoing need for additional shelter beds.

Thankfully there are places which offer some help during extreme weather. For those experiencing homelessness we can reach out to organizations which cater to their needs directly. Or you can do a few simple things which can make a lot of difference if everyone helped in a small way.

Socks for the Homeless

Living on the street in extreme weather can be brutal. Having a dry pair of socks can make the difference between getting a good night's sleep or not.

How Can You Help?

During extreme weather several organizations such as the Men's Hostel and Catholic Charities would appreciate clean dry socks which the St Vincent de Paul is collection on Dec 9 & 10.

Providing Care Packages

Covenant House's Street Outreach team helps kids aged 16 to 24 who are living, or at risk of living, on Vancouver's streets. Finding kids in crisis, the Covenant House team builds trusting relationships with street youth by meeting them where they are and by being a consistent, supportive presence in their lives. They offer food, counselling, minor medical attention and friendship and invite them to come to their Drop-In program for a hot meal or help to get back on their feet.

How Can You Help?

The OLPH Youth Ministry is having a bake sale after the 5pm mass this Sunday and the next, December 3 and 10. Proceeds will go to make care packages for the less fortunate in East Vancouver. Please come and show us your support at our bake sale! Thank you.



Helping Disadvantaged Families

Lord Strathcona is the community school our parish is supporting in the Giving Tree Program. Strathcona School is part of the Inner City School Program, a program that was created to meet the needs of students and families in the Downtown East Side. The Strathcona School Pantry is a program which supports school families all-year round. The purpose of the pantry is to give emergency supplies to school families in need of the essentials such as food and baby supplies.

How Can You Help?

The school has requested the following items to be hung on our Giving Tree. Among them are rice, spaghetti, instant cereals, diapers and canned foods, No Frills gift cards. Please pick up a tag from the Giving Tree and bring your gift in next Sunday.

ADVENT: A TIME TO REACH OUT



Pope: When You Serve Others, Stay Humble

Pope Francis said on Thursday to always be humble when serving others, especially the least of these, remembering how much you yourself have received that you did not deserve.

"When you do some activity for the 'little ones,' the excluded and the least, never do it from a pedestal of superiority," Pope Francis said Nov. 23. "Think rather that all that you do for them is a way of returning what you have received for free."

"Make a welcoming and friendly space for all the least of these to come into your life: the marginalized, men and women who live in our streets, parks or stations; the thousands of unemployed, young people and adults," he continued.

As well as the "many sick people who do not have access to adequate care; many abandoned elders; mistreated women; immigrants seeking a respectable life; all those who live in situations deprived of dignity and even the light of the Gospel."

Learn to be, as St. Francis said, "sick with the sick, afflicted with the afflicted," the Pope said. Francis met Thursday with a group of around 400 Franciscans, members of the First and Third Ordinary Orders, encouraging them to approach everything they do with the humility of a child.

"Your relationship with Him should be that of a child: humble and confident and, like that of the Publican in the Gospel, (who is) aware of his sin," and asks for God's mercy.

The Pope said that the Franciscan concept of "minority," or of humbling yourself, is an important aspect of their relationships with God, with their brothers in the order, and with all men and women, because for St. Francis, "man has nothing of his own if not his own sin, and his value is his worth before God and nothing else."

But how do we remain humble in all our relationships and interactions with others? he asked. By avoiding any behavior of superiority, such as quick judgments, speaking badly of others behind their back, demanding repayment for favors, and using our authority to subdue others.

We should also try to avoid the temptation to become angry or upset at others' sins. In all our interactions with others follow "the principle of charity," the Pope said.

"Therefore, while justice will bring you to recognize the rights of everyone, charity transcends these rights and calls you to fraternal communion; because it is not the rights you love, but the people whom you are called to accept with respect, understanding and mercy.