
Ñ Contra Mundum Ñ

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The Congregation of St. Athanasius - Roman Catholic, Anglican Use

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NOTES FROM THE CHAPLAIN

THE prophet Isaiah is sometimes called “the fifth evangelist.” It is he who with incomparable clarity, sees the end of Israel’s longing for deliverance and depicts the Person of the Saviour and the nature of His mission. So it is no wonder that the Church in her Advent liturgy chooses so many of her readings, antiphons, and responsories, from the book of this one memorable prophet.

The season of Advent begins December 3rd. In these four weeks before Christmas, Holy Church bids us consider the long period of preparation between the promise of Genesis 3.15 (“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, between thy seed and her seed, and it shall bruise thy heel and thou shalt bruise his head”) and the fulfillment proclaimed in Galatians 4:4-5 (“God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law that we might receive adoption as sons.”)

Liturgically it is only four weeks. But Advent calls to mind the centuries of waiting, times of disloyalty, disobedience, idolatry, national apostasy, and yet with these clarion prophetic voices and the sacrificial system of the temple prefiguring the Saviour, pointing to Him, and ultimately converging on Him. No wonder Saint Augustine says of the Old Testament that it “bears Christ in its loins!”

In taking the measure of these centuries of longing, pain, and unfulfilled desire, one might ask what kept the Saviour from coming sooner! But again, in Galatians 4 we are told “when the fullness of time was come.” It was God’s time, not man’s timetable, that was operative. Divine wisdom orders all things mightily.

The first sin, the sin in the garden of Eden, was pride. It was our claim to rule our own life that rejected God’s sovereignty. For centuries man was not even remotely capable of receiving and welcoming God’s gift of Himself. We now know God’s magnificent plan, and His staggering humility in becoming the Babe of Bethlehem. But the long centuries that followed the Fall was a necessary schooling, a combination of waiting, preparation, and the experience of our own misery and weakness, that led to the understanding that we need a Redeemer.

God’s wisdom was that the world needed to be prepared gradually. So the hope of a Messiah enters and then eventually goes to the very heart of Jewish theology. In each succeeding generation the longing is sharpened. “He will come, he will not tarry.” (Habakkuk 2.3) And something else happens. The concept of redemption widened. The coming of Messiah would restore Israel’s preeminence. But the Coming One would redeem the whole world. “The kings of Tarshish and of the isles....the kings of Arabia and Saba shall bring gifts.” (Psalm 72) So in the providence of God, the whole world was being made ready. “Desire of me, and I will give thee the nations for thine inheritance.” (Psalm 3).

And then it happens! “While all things were in silence, and the night was in the midst of her swift course, thine Almighty Word, O Lord, leaped down out of thy royal throne.”

The Catechism teaches that the Bible is a single book about Jesus Christ. Our Lord taught the Apostles that all salvation history is to be seen in the light of the central event of His Incarnation, death and resurrection. (see Luke 24:44-46). And so we have this Catholic season of Advent. It reminds us that the Babe of Bethlehem wasn’t a spur-of-the-moment drop-in. Advent bids us remember all the careful preparation Almighty God lavished on a people longing for deliverance. With the incredible richness of the season, one could wish Advent came at any other time of year than in the madness of December and its rush to the holidays!

But here it is. Advent proclaims that you and I are the people of Christ’s inheritance. We benefit from the fulfillment of that hope for which the Jews of old suffered and ardently longed. They longed to see our day. And so Advent bids Christians ask the question “what are we doing with the Day of the Lord?”

FATHER BRADFORD

A Prayer for the Anglican Use

O HOLY Ghost the Lord, who on Pentecost gavest the Church the gift of tongues, that Christ might be known and served by peoples of diverse nations and customs: watch over our heritage within that Church, we pray thee, that, led by thy guidance and strengthened by thy grace, we may increase in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man; Who livest and reignest with the Father and the Son, one God, world without end. Amen.

SHORT NOTES

There are regional penance services for Advent scheduled on Sunday December 10 throughout the archdiocese. In the central region the service will be at the Church of St Thomas Aquinas in Jamaica Plain at 4:00pm. Other locations are in Lowell, Peabody, Whitman, and Watertown.

There is an annual Advent/Christmas concert in St Theresa of Ávila Church on Sunday, December 10 at 4:00pm. This concert features various choirs and combinations of instruments and handbells, and is always well attended.

Our thanks to Father George Greenway, who was our celebrant and preacher on Sunday, October 29th. Fr Greenway is a priest of the Diocese of Springfield and a good friend of our congregation.

The congregation will offer a **SPRING RETREAT** May 4-6, 2001 at Saint Benedict Abbey in Still River. The retreat conductor is The Revd Romanus Cessario, OP. Details, including costs and registration will be available early in the new year.

Please return your filled-in pledge card if you have not already done so. This will greatly assist us in preparing our parish program for the new year. Cards were mailed to parishioners in mid-October. Extras may be obtained from the parish treasurer Bruce Rand.



Saint of the Month



Lambeth Palace Library, London
The murder of Thomas Becket
from a 15th century manuscript

St. Thomas of Canterbury, Bishop and Martyr

(Thomas à Becket, 1118-1170)

Feast Day 29 December

THOMAS à Becket, was born on December 21, 1118, the son of Gilbert à Becket, an English merchant and at one time Sheriff of London, and a French Mother, Matilda of Caen in Normandy. He was educated at Merton Priory in Surrey and was later sent to Paris to study. After five years in Paris, Thomas returned to England where he joined the staff of the then Archbishop of Canterbury, Theobald. However, he did not remain in England for long and the Archbishop sent him abroad again to

study law.

Following his return to England, Thomas was made Archdeacon of Canterbury because of his skills at administration. After the death of King Stephen in 1154, Archbishop Theobald recommended Thomas to the new King, Henry II (formerly Henry of Anjou) as Chancellor. Apparently, the two men, Henry and Thomas, took an instant liking to each other, maybe because they were both forthright and hot tempered.

Archbishop Theobald died in 1161 and at that time, the King was the person to choose the successor. The decision took some time but Henry made up his mind that his friend, Thomas, would become the new Archbishop. As Thomas had been acting as Chancellor he had not risen in the Church as he might have and did not hold a particularly high 'rank'. Because of this, in 1162, he first had to be ordained priest and consecrated bishop on the next morning. He was then made Archbishop later on the same day.

No doubt King Henry believed that with his friend in the highest office in the Church in England there would be an easy alliance between Church and State. However, when Henry amended laws to place the State in a position to take charge of cases involving the clergy, the trouble started. Thomas originally agreed to the changes but subsequently changed his mind and did penance to show that he had been wrong in his original decision. This act, in those days, was taken as an insult to the King. As a result, Henry called Becket to Northampton and asked him to account for certain disputed sums of money that had passed

through his hands while he was chancellor and later Archbishop of Canterbury. The conflict caused by these accusations was extreme and Thomas, already well liked by the general populace, was helped in October, 1164, to flee England for France.

Thomas remained in exile in France for six years, with the support of the King of France, first at Pontigny and then at Sens. In 1169, while still in France, he excommunicated the Bishops of London and Salisbury who had stood against him and supported the King. In 1170, while Henry was in France himself, Thomas returned to England and landed at the Port of Sandwich. He was cheered by the local people from the time he landed to his arrival back in Canterbury.

Meanwhile, back in France, the most ardent opponent of Thomas, who was Archbishop Roger of York had the ear of the King. Archbishop Roger, who, as Archbishop of York, would have been number two in the hierarchy of the Church in England, suggested to Henry that, 'while Thomas lives, you will have neither quiet times nor a tranquil kingdom'. This threw Henry into one of his rages and is supposed to have exclaimed, "Who will rid me of this meddlesome priest?" He was overheard by four of his knights who decided that they could gain great favour by dealing with the problem and left immediately for England. The knights were; Richard Brito, Hugh de Moreville, Reginald FitzUrse, and William de Tracy. They made for Canterbury and arrived there in the late afternoon of December 29th, 1170.

The knights' arrival and their cries so frightened the monks that they persuaded Thomas to flee from

his residence towards the Cathedral where they felt that he would be safe. Giving chase, the knights burst into the Cathedral as Vespers was being sung. Now flying into a rage himself, Archbishop Thomas shook off the Monks and went into the transept to face the four knights.

The knights tried to seize him, but he fought back, actually knocking FitzUrse to the floor. At this point, FitzUrse, who had been called 'a pimp' by Thomas in this shoving match drew his sword and threatened The Archbishop. De Tracey also drew his sword and called out, "strike! strike!" to the others and delivered the first blow. It took three more wounds before Thomas went down. It was Brito who delivered the death blow, slashing at his head, actually severing the top of the cranium, spilling the brains of the Martyr on the floor. The tip of the sword came off with the strength of the impact. It is said that there was a great storm within an hour of the death of the Archbishop and people flocked to the Cathedral to mourn for him. Three days after this there began a series of miracles which are depicted in 'the miracle windows' of the Cathedral and were attributed to Thomas. In 1173, the Archbishop was canonized by Pope Alexander III.

On July 12, 1174 Henry II came to Canterbury to perform penance at the tomb of the Saint, probably more as a result of public pressure than anything else but it would be nice to think that he was saddened by his part in the tragedy. It is said that he put on sackcloth and ashes at Harbledown and walked barefoot into the City where he was beaten

with birch twigs by eighty monks. He then did penance at the tomb of the martyr in the crypt, remaining there for the night.



Friday, December 8th
Immaculate Conception
of the Virgin Mary
Solemn Mass
7:30pm

This is a holy day of obligation.

"Christ did not pass through the Virgin as through a channel, but truly took flesh and was truly fed with milk from her. He truly ate as we eat and drank as we drink. For if the incarnation was a figment then our salvation was a figment."

CYRIL OF JERUSALEM (D. 386)



Christmas Schedule

Sunday, December 24th
The Fourth Sunday of Advent
Solemn Mass
10:30am

Christmas Eve
Procession, Blessing of the Creche
Solemn Mass of Christmas
8:30pm

Sunday, December 31st
The Holy Family
Sunday in the Octave of Christmas
Solemn Mass
10:30am

Monday, January 1st
Mary, Mother of God
Octave of Christmas
Solemn Mass
10:30am

Note that when this solemnity falls on a Monday or Saturday it is not of obligation the United States. Neither does that make attendance optional. The faithful, while not obliged, will make every effort to assist at Mass on this day.

Christmas flower envelopes are available for your contributions towards the decoration of the chapel for the Holy Season. Please return all donations to the parish by December 17th so that memorials and thanksgivings may be included in the Christmas service leaflet. Many thanks.

The Congregation of Saint Athanasius,

The Revd. Richard Sterling Bradford,
Chaplain

worshipping at

Saint Theresa Convent
Chapel

10 St. Theresa Ave.

West Roxbury, MA 02132

Rectory: 192 Foster Street,
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Tel/Fax: (617) 787-0553

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Sundays 10:30am. Sung Mass, followed by coffee and fellowship in the convent solarium.

Saint Theresa's Convent Chapel, 10 St Theresa Avenue in West Roxbury. Parking available.

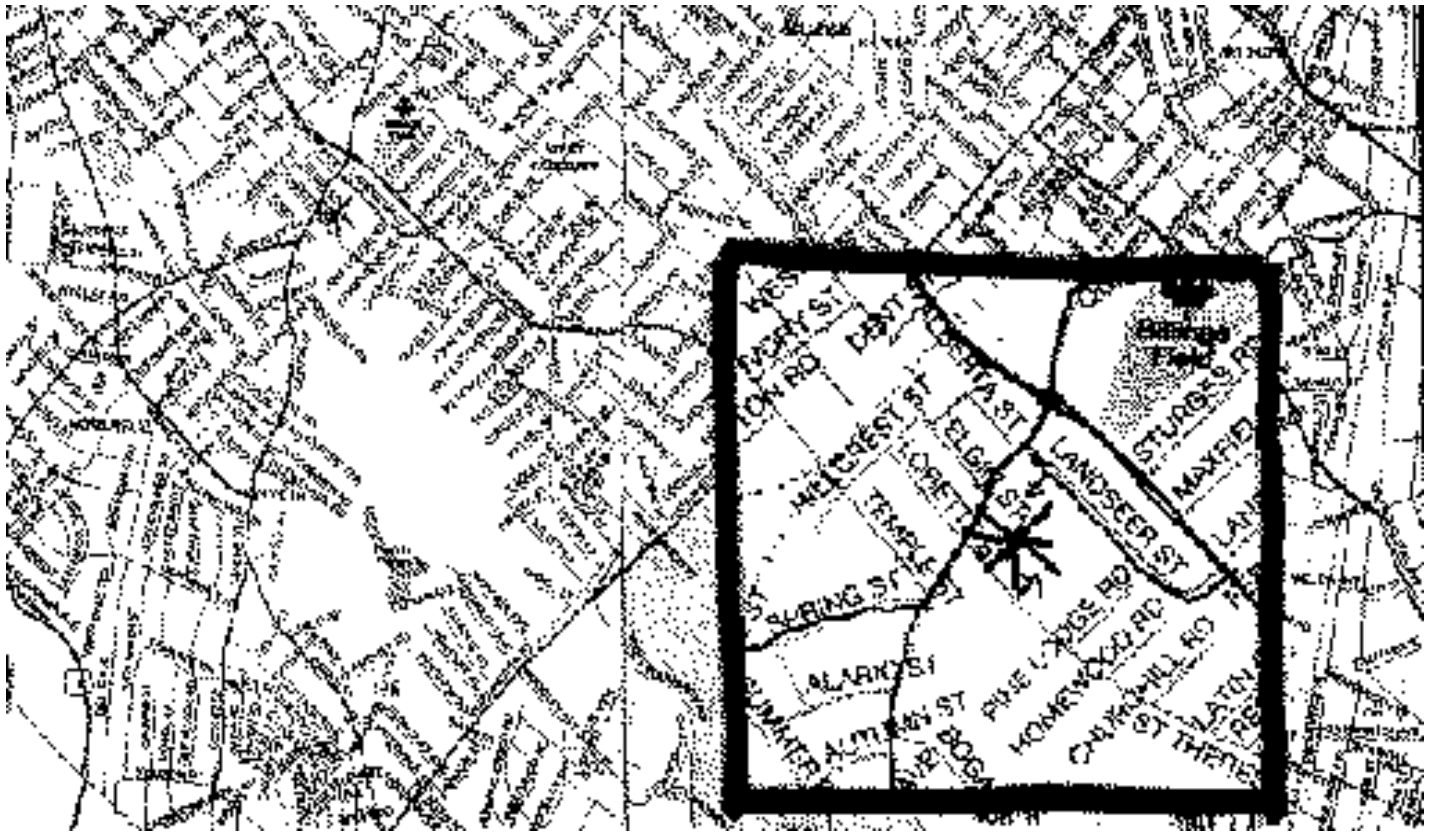
North and Mass Pike. Take Route 128 South to Route 109 East towards Dedham. Route 109 ends at the VFW Parkway and becomes Spring Street which leads to St Theresa's Church.

South. Take Route 128 to Route 1A North at Dedham and continue on Route 1 to Spring Street and turn right onto Spring Street which leads to the Church.

Dorchester and Mattapan. Take River Street to Cummins Highway to Washington Street, south to LaGrange Street, and west (right) on LaGrange to Landseer Street and into St Theresa's parking lot.

Brookline. Take VFW Parkway to LaGrange Street, turn left onto LaGrange into West Roxbury. Cross Centre Street and turn right on Landseer Street and into the Church lot.

MBTA Orange Line to Forest Hills. Then take the #35 (Dedham Mall) bus, which has the most frequent service. Routes 36, 37, and 38 also stop in front of St Theresa's Church.



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