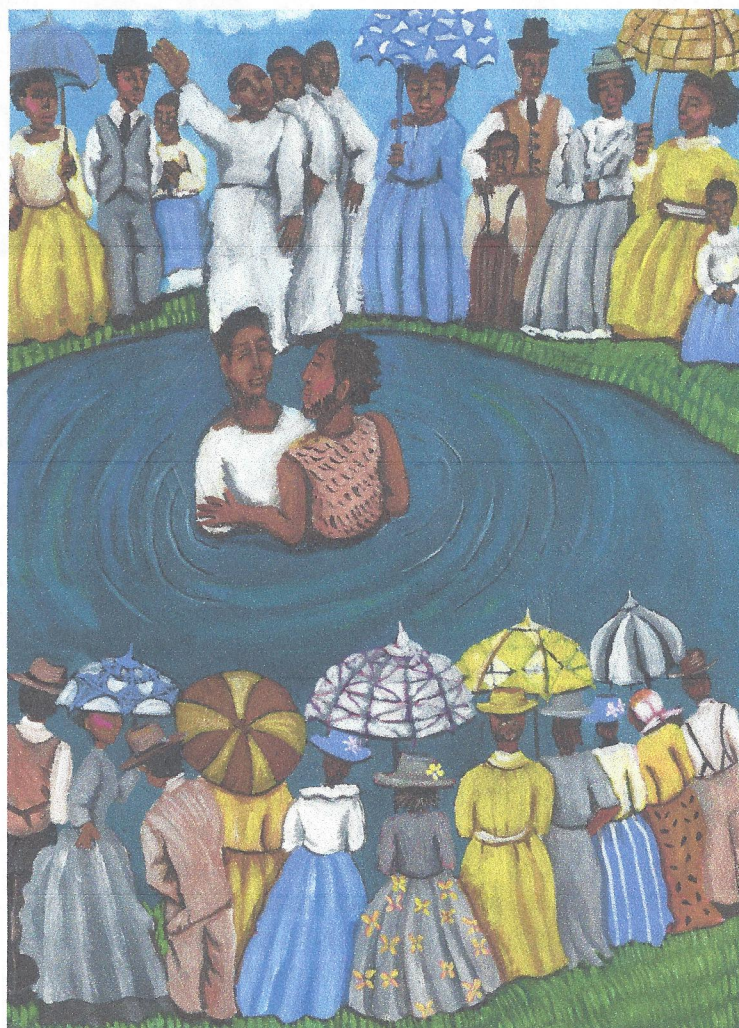


SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Waters of Hopefulness and Harmony

Heavenly Father,
in your wisdom you call us to your Son,
who welcomes us,
and through our Baptism,
we find the source of peacefulness
and harmony.

May our lives be spent in hopeful
encouragement of one another,
with the Spirit as our guide,
and justice our path.

May the community into which
we are baptized
continue to be a place of welcome
and forgiveness.

We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

December 4, 2016

Roots, Stumps, Branches, and Fruit

Today's Readings: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Romans 15:4-9; Matthew 3:1-12. "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse" begins today's First Reading. These words not only set the tone for the day's Scriptures but are the foundation for images and understandings of the coming of the Messiah and of his familial roots. Isaiah's prophetic voice outlines a kingdom where the Messiah brings justice but also one that is an outgrowth of the line of David. The son of Jesse, David was a shepherd who became king. The kingdom described today is one in which the ruler will be guided by the poor and justice will be the outcome of his judgments.

When justice reigns, all will live in harmony and all of creation will be at peace. The harmony of wild animals living with domestic ones, and of children who curiously

reach into a snake's home without harm coming to them, are the bases for the Gospel, where John the Baptist, the wild precursor, proclaims the coming of the Kingdom. His warning to *prepare* calls us to question whether we are ready for a kingdom of harmony. When John states that the ax is ready for the trees that do not bear good fruit, we are taken back to the stump of Jesse.

The Jesse Tree, the genealogy of Jesus' family, is full of hope and promise. In your homes, discover who some of the ancestors of Jesus were, and make a Jesse Tree with symbols of those ancestors. Rediscover the ancestors of your family, those who brought hope to your family tree. In that way, you may find the encouragement "to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus" (Romans 15:5).



THIS WEEK AT HOME

Monday, December 5

A Forgiving Household

Forgiveness and mercy can be difficult to accept, as Jesus reminds us in today's Gospel. The season of Advent is an opportunity to prepare for the coming of Christ by seeking forgiveness as we prepare our hearts and forgive others as we prepare our homes for Christ to enter. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 35:1–10; Psalm 85:9ab, 10, 11–12, 13–14; Luke 5:17–26.*

Tuesday, December 6

St. Nicholas, Bishop

As you place your shoes for Bishop Nicholas of Myra to fill, remember his generosity. He gave money to help three young women who were being taken advantage of. This season of Advent consider ringing bells to assist the Salvation Army, or finding a group that others have not yet begun to assist, and changing their lives. Most appropriately today, donate some shoes for homeless children. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:1–11; Psalm 96:1–2, 3, 10ac, 11–12, 13; Matthew 18:12–14.*

Wednesday, December 7

St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

In today's Gospel, Jesus says that his "yoke is easy" and his "burden is light." St. Ambrose accepted the yoke and burden that the city of Milan placed on him, electing him their bishop. Still a catechumen, Ambrose was baptized, ordained, and made a bishop on December 7, 374. Our burdens may not seem quite as daunting as were those for Ambrose, but we know we do not tackle them alone. *Today's Readings: Isaiah 40:25–31; Psalm 103:1–2, 3–4, 8, 10; Matthew 11:28–30.*

Thursday, December 8

Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

"Nothing will be impossible with God." Mary accepted the angel Gabriel's message and even reached out to support her cousin, Elizabeth, as she approached the birth of her son, John the Baptist. At home today, let your family support system be strengthened by reaching out beyond your needs. Then find a symbol for someone else in your family and hang it on the Jesse Tree. *Today's Readings: Genesis 3:9–15, 20; 145:1, 9, 10–11, 12–13ab; Ephesians 1:3–6, 11–12; Luke 1:26–38.*

Friday, December 9

The Law of the Lord Is Wisdom

In a time of quick judgments and hurtful words, often found in social media, today's Gospel reminds us to hold off on our criticisms that are instant rather than thoughtful, immediate rather than purposeful. Wisdom is to be our guide. Today's psalm response is our comfort for this week of Advent: "Those who follow you, Lord, will have the light of life." *Today's Readings: Isaiah 48:17–19; Psalm 1:1–2, 3, 4, 6; Matthew 11:16–19.*

Saturday, December 10

O Come, Divine Messiah

Halfway through the season of Advent, we are still waiting, but we wait with hope. The days are getting shorter, and so we sing of the Messiah's coming as the world waits in silence "the day when hope shall sing its triumph." Find a way to break through the darkness and silence in your world today, and discover Christ in that activity, reaching out and breaking through. *Today's Readings: Sirach 48:1–4, 9–11; Psalm 80: 2ac, 3b, 15–16, 18–19; Matthew 17:9a, 10–13.*

