



St. Mary's Catholic Parish

Albany, Oregon

Advent 2003 25 Days to a Stronger Heart

Advent Calendar

Welcome Home

728 Ellsworth SW
Albany, OR 97321
541-926-1449

Emergency only: 541-990-5552

Our Mission Statement

We, St. Mary's Parish, are a people responding to Christ's call to conversion, new life and discipleship with a nurturing Community.

We celebrate this new life in Scripture and the Sacraments of the Roman Catholic tradition.

Our Celebration impels and transforms us to be Spirit filled individuals who can reach out and minister to all people challenging and enabling them to build God's Kingdom of justice and holiness.



- Dec. 2—Advent Taize Service at 7 PM
- Dec. 8 ~ Feast of the Immaculate Conception, Masses at 9 AM & 7 PM
- Dec. 12 ~ Virgin of Guadalupe Celebration, 10 PM
- Dec. 14 ~ Christmas Sing-a-long, 7 PM
- Dec. 15 ~ Advent Reconciliation Service, St. Ed 's, Lebanon , 7 PM
- Dec. 16 ~ Advent Reconciliation Service, St. Mary 's, Corvallis , 7 PM
- Dec. 17 ~ Advent Reconciliation Service, St. Mary 's, Albany , 7 PM
- Dec. 20 ~ Traditional Hispanic Posada, 7 PM Spanish Mass and following.
- Dec. 24 ~ Christmas Eve Family Mass— 5:30 P M
Christmas Eve Mass— 10:00 PM
- Dec. 25 ~ Christmas Day Mass— 10:00 AM



Day One – Sunday , November 30

1st Sunday of Advent

Jeremiah 33:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:2

Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

"May the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, so as to strengthen your hearts." 1 Thes 3:12-13

Today begins the church season of Advent, our new year. The apostle Paul , in his letter to the Thessalonians, urges us to strengthen our hearts. A heart is a muscle and it needs exercise and training to be at its best.

This coming Advent season, we will go into training, so that our hearts can truly be at their best to receive Jesus at Christmas time.

Today marks the first of a 25-day program to strengthen our hearts. Today we will set our goals, so that we can measure our progress through Advent.

Just like for our physical health, we might want to lose 10 pounds or exercise for 30 minutes three days a week. So too for our spiritual health. To strengthen our hearts, we need to set some goals.



What will you do this Advent to "increase and abound in love for all"?

Can you set aside some time each day for regular prayer or Scripture reading?

Is there someone that you have offended that you need to apologize to?

Can your love for all extend beyond your family and friends to include the poor this Advent? Who will be on your Christmas shopping list?

Light one candle on your Advent wreath today.

Pray: "Come, Lord Jesus , strengthen my heart, so that I might live as you desire. Give me the grace to always follow you. I ask your blessings on my family, my friends and on all Your People. Amen."

Day Two – Monday, December 1

Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11

"Come let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob " Isaiah 2:3

Mountain climbing can be very good exercise for our hearts, but we need to proper equipment if we are too be successful. Shoes and outerwear that are adequate for climbing; a map and a

compass; companions, a way to signal for help, food and water, and shelter if we are going to be out for long.

Successful mountain climbing requires careful planning. Strengthening our hearts during this Advent season requires careful planning, too, if we are to climb the Lord's mountain. What is the map that you are using to set direction for your life?

Who are the companions that you have chosen to be with?
How can you signal for help if you get lost or in trouble on your climb of the Lord's mountain?



Tomorrow night is the Taize service at church at 7 PM . Please plan to come.

Day Three – Tuesday, December 2

Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21 -24

"The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest." Isaiah 11:6

An important part of strengthening our hearts is to keep the right balance between activity and rest. Rest is essential to give our muscles a chance to renew, a chance to relax and build up.

Tonight is our parish's Advent Taize Service at 7 PM . It is a lovely opportunity to rest in the Lord.

How can you build in time to rest, to renew yourself? When was the last time that you did that?

How are you balancing rest with busy-ness of your life?

Do you help others to rest, or are you a cause of commotion and upset for them?

Remember, the Book of Genesis says that even God rested on the seventh day!

Day Four –Wednesday December 3

Saint Francis Xavier (Memorial)

St. Francis Xavier was one of the founding fathers of the Jesuits. He is considered one of the greatest missionaries.

Isaiah 25:6-10a; Matthew 15:29 - 37

"I do not want to send them away hungry, for fear they may collapse on the way."

Matthew 15: 32

A key to having a healthy heart is a good diet. What are you hungry for in your life? Are you on a junk food diet - a diet of grudges or selfishness or anger? Or is your diet rich in good nutrients - like forgiveness, joy and patience and hope?

How can you use these 25 days to make your diet better? More life giving?

How can you use these 25 days to become more like St. Francis Xavier by spreading the Good News of Jesus to more people?



Day Five – Thursday, December 4

Isaiah 26:1-6; Matthew 7:21 , 24-27

"Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock." Matthew 7:24

Strengthening our hearts, just like any type of strengthening exercise could require a good trainer.

Someone that we listen to, who helps us know what is the best program for us.

Who is it that you listen to? The TV? The voices of buy, buy, buy? The messages that tell us it's okay to put others down, as long as it feels right or good to us?

Who influences your life for good or for evil?

Whose lives are you influencing by what you say and how you live?

Day Six – Friday, December 5

Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27 -31

"Son of David , have pity on us!" Matthew 9:28

Sometimes, when we are in training, we injure ourselves - maybe a pulled muscle or a strained ankle. Jesus - the Son of David - does take pity on us when we are hurt.

Is there something in your life right now that needs some healing in order for you to strengthen your heart?

Is there an old relationship or an old grudge that blinds you from living life to its fullest? Are you willing to ask Jesus to take pity on you - to heal you - so that you can move on with your life?

Day Seven – Saturday, December 6

St. Nicholas Feast Day

Nicholas was a 4 th century bishop who is better known as St. Nick. He ran a monastery, was a prisoner during the time of the Christian persecutions and was present at the Council of Nicea . One story tells of a father who couldn't afford his three daughters' dowries. Nick tossed three bags of gold through the kitchen window. From this story comes the custom of setting out shoes for Saint Nicholas to fill. He is the patron saint of boys, brides, children, Greece, merchants and travelers

Isaiah 6:1-8; Luke 10:1-9

"Do not move about from one house to another."

Oftentimes when we begin a diet or exercise program, we move from one thing to another, without really giving anything a chance to work. Our society gives us the message that everything and anything can happen quickly, even within the hour. But we know better, we know that it takes time and commitment to keep faithful to our goals.



Where do you find yourself moving about in your spiritual life?

How will you celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas? Is there something that you can share with another person? Is there something you can give to someone who has less than you do?

Day 8 – Sunday, December 7

2nd Sunday of Advent

Baruch 5:1-9; Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

"And this is my prayer: that your love may increase ever more and more." Philippians 1:9

Today is begins the second week of Advent. How are you doing on those goals that you set for yourself last Sunday?

When exercising, we are told that increasing our pulse rate is a good thing for our hearts.

Increasing our love is also a good thing for our hearts. How can you increase your love for those closest to you? Sometimes even with the people we love the most, we put limits on our love. We might do that to keep ourselves safe or to keep control in the relationship.

What do you need to do to increase your love for your family and friends?

What do you need to do to increase your love for acquaintances at work or at school?

What do you need to do to increase your love for those whom you find most unlovable?

Tomorrow is the Feast of the Immaculate Conception. Plan now to attend Mass at either 9 AM or 7 PM .

Light two candles on your Advent Wreath.

Pray: "Come, Lord Jesus , strengthen my heart, so that I might live as you desire. Give me the grace to always follow you. I ask your blessings on my family, my friends and on all Your People. Amen."



St. Nicholas, pray for us

Day 9 – Monday, December 8

Immaculate Conception

Genesis 3:9-15, 20; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11-12; Luke 1:26-38

"You have eaten then from the tree of which I had forbidden you to eat!"

Our diet has a big impact on a healthy heart. In today's reading from Genesis, Adam and Eve ate the "forbidden fruit", something that had a bad effect on their spiritual hearts. And on the hearts of all generations of humanity to come. Mary, the Mother of God, made her heart strong by doing God's will, rather than her own. Mary's decision had an immense impact on all humankind. Our spiritual diet is so important for a healthy, strong heart. What is your diet like? What do you read or listen to? Is there some "junk food" that you need to eliminate from your diet? What is the "forbidden fruit" that you want, even though you know that it might not be good for you?

Today is the feast of the Immaculate Conception. It is the feast that celebrates that Mary was conceived without original sin. It is a holy day of obligation. Masses are at 9 AM and 7 PM.



Blessed are you among women

Day 10 – Tuesday, December 9

Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14

"Like a shepherd he feeds his flock; in his arms he gathers the lambs, Carrying them in his bosom, and leading the ewes with care."

Saint Juan Diego

Juan Diego was the peasant to whom Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared. Juan lived a simple life as a weaver, farmer, and laborer. One day Juan passed Tepeyac Hill; he heard music and saw a glowing cloud encircled by a rainbow. A woman's voice called him to the top of the hill. There he saw a beautiful young woman dressed like an Aztec princess. She said she was the Virgin Mary and asked Juan to tell the bishop to build a church on that site. She said, "I vividly desire that a church be built on this site, so that in it I can be present and give my love, compassion, help, and defense, for I am your most devoted mother . . . to hear your laments and to remedy all your miseries, pains, and sufferings."

Juan said to the Blessed Virgin Mary: "I am a nobody, I am a small rope, a tiny ladder, the tail end, a leaf" He had a great devotion to the Eucharist and would often walk 15 miles to go to Mass. (source www.catholic.org)

How might I imitate St. Juan Diego in my life? Imitate his humility? Imitate his obedience? Imitate his devotion?

Day 11 – Wednesday, December 10

Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30

"Come to me, all you who labor and are burdened, and I will give you rest." Matthew 11:28

Taking time to rest - whether it's a vacation to Hawaii or a power nap helps to restore our heart. Jesus invites us to rest in Him.

What is it that is burdening you? Wearing you down? Can you turn your troubles over to Jesus? Are you willing to give over your worries, your fears to Jesus? Is there something, someone that is keeping you from resting fully in Jesus?

Day 12 – Thursday, December 11

Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15

"For I am the Lord, your God, who grasp your right hand; It is I who say to you, 'Fear not, I will help you.'" Isaiah 41:13

Stress, worry, fear, anxiety ... all of those things are bad for our hearts. God tells us not to be afraid - that God is with us to help us - whenever we need God's help.

Can you think of a time when God has helped you?
What is it that you need God's help with in your life now?
How might you be a means of God's help to others?

Plan ahead to attend the celebration of Our Lady of Guadalupe tomorrow evening at 10 PM.



Day 13 - Friday, December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

Revelation 11:19a, 12:1-6a, 10; Luke 1:39 -47

Day 13 - we're more than half way there on our 25 day program to strengthen our hearts. Take some time out to congratulate yourself for coming this far in your program.

Today we celebrate the feast of our Lady of Guadalupe. The Virgin of Guadalupe is the patron of North America . Our Hispanic sisters and brothers have a special devotion to the Virgin. Tonight at church, at 10 PM , the Hispanic community will gather to celebrate this feast day. Everyone is welcome to join them.

Day 14 – Saturday, December 13

St. Lucy

Sirach 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:9a, 10-13

St. Lucy dedicated her life to virginity at an early age. She suffered much for her faith. Her name Lucy means “light”. It is fitting that we celebrate her feast day during the Advent season as we await Jesus the Light of the World.

St. Lucy had a strong heart. Is my heart strong enough to suffer for my faith, for my beliefs?

Am I willing to let the light of my faith shine forth even when I might be ridiculed or put down?

Day 15 – Sunday, December 14

3rd Sunday of Advent

Zephaniah 3:14-18a; Philippians 4:4-7; Luke 3:10-18

"Your kindness should be known to all. The Lord is near. Philippians 4:5

The Lord is indeed near. Today is the third Sunday of Advent; in our tradition it is called Gaudete Sunday (from a Latin word meaning rejoice). It is a time to rejoice. It is almost Christmas; almost time to celebrate again the birth of Jesus into our world.

This sense of anticipation and celebration is good for our hearts. Having something to look forward to gives us a reason to get up in the morning, it helps us keep going when things are difficult or when we are down.

What is it that you most look forward to about this Christmas? How will you welcome Jesus into your heart? What are you doing to help others prepare for this Christmas?

Light three candles on your Advent wreath.

Pray: “Come, Lord Jesus , strengthen my heart, so that I might live as you desire. Give me the grace to always follow you. I ask your blessings on my family, my friends and on all Your People. Amen.”

Plan ahead, this Wednesday is our parish Advent Reconciliation service at 7 PM .



Day 16 – Monday, December 15

Numbers 24:2-7, 15-17a; Matthew 21:23-27

"By what authority are you doing these things? And who gave you this authority?"

Matthew 21:23

When someone introduces a new diet or exercise program, we want to know what their credentials are. How can we trust that what they are telling us will really help us? We might want to check out their references, or talk to others who have undergone their program. Jesus has the best program available for strengthening our hearts. His authority comes straight from God! He has plenty of references right here in our St. Mary 's community.

Are you willing to listen to what Jesus has to say to your life? Or do you question Jesus ' authority? Do you sometimes think that you might know more than Jesus ? What can you do to open your heart wider to receive Jesus and his will into your life?

Day 17 – Tuesday, December 16

Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Matthew 21:28 -32

"They shall do no wrong and speak no lies." Zephaniah 3:13

It takes a very strong heart to avoid lies or being creative with the truth. The Holy Spirit gives us the gifts of insight, wisdom and courage to strengthen our hearts for the truth.

Am I willing to tell the truth, even when I might be inconvenienced or even put down?

Do I search for the truth or do I just go for an easy answer?

Am I willing to listen to others, even if they might have a different opinion than I do in hope of finding the truth?

Tomorrow is our Advent Reconciliation Service. It will be an opportunity to strengthen our hearts with integrity, truth and forgiveness.

Day 18 – Wednesday, December 17

Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

"The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ , the son of David , the son of Abraham ."

Today's gospel begins with a listing of some of the ancestors of Jesus . This is a Scripture passage that we often pass by, because we don't know all of the characters and often we can't even pronounce their names. Matthew gives us quite a list of ancestors – some strong hearted and some weak. In spite of the humanness of this list, Jesus was still born into our world.

Am I willing to believe that I can bring Jesus into our world?

Am I willing to believe that in fact, God has chosen me to be one of his family ?

How has God used my failings or my successes to accomplish God's will?

Tonight is the Advent Reconciliation Service for our parish at 7 PM . It is a time for me to acknowledge my failures and to ask God to strengthen my heart for the coming of Jesus !

Day 19 – Thursday, December 18

Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-25

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel, which means God is with us." Matthew 1:23

Having a personal trainer might be an unheard of thing for most of us - a luxury that we can't really afford. Someone who knows us so well that they could plan the best diet and exercise for us.

Yet, God has sent Jesus to us - to each and every one of us. To be our own personal trainer. To know us better than we know ourselves. To be " Emmanuel " - God with us.

When have you felt God with you in your life?

Where do you most clearly feel the presence of God?

Are you willing to let Jesus be your personal trainer?

To follow Jesus ' advice for your life?

As we approach Christmas, how will you welcome Emmanuel into your heart?

Day 20 – Friday, December 19

Judges 13 :2 -7, 24-25a; Luke 1:5-25

"I am Gabriel , who stand before God. I was sent to speak to you and to announce to you this good news." Luke 1:19

There's lots of good advice surrounding us about strengthening our hearts. We know that if we exercise regularly and eat wisely, we will be healthier. Still we make choices as if we don't really believe that at all.

In today's Gospel story from Luke , Zechariah questions Gabriel 's message from God. He doesn't really believe that God has something good in store for him.

God really does know the best for our lives, yet often we live as if we don't hear God, or don't believe God - really.

How can you find out what God wants for your life? Who are the angels that God is sending to

you - helping your to know God's will? What keeps you from listening? What keeps you from truly believing that God has your best interests at heart?

Day 21 – Saturday, December 20

Isaiah 7:10 -14; Luke 1:26 -38

" Mary said, 'Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your will. " Luke 1:38

Playing sports helps strengthen our hearts, helps strengthen our character. If we're on a team, we need to let the coach call the plays. In today's gospel, Mary is saying she's willing to be a team player. Her team- the human race; her coach - God himself. Mary is letting the coach call the plays for her life.

Are you willing to let God call the plays for your life?

Can you accept God's will?

Welcome God's will for your life?

What do you need to do to strengthen your heart so that you could more willingly say "yes" to God?



Day 22 – Sunday, December 21

4th Sunday of Advent

Micah 5:1-4a; Hebrews 10:5-10; Luke 1:39-45

"Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled." Luke 1:45

On the back wall of our church is a relief of Mary , with those very words from today's gospel. Mary was willing to trust in God. To literally stake her life on God's goodness. And it paid off - Mary 's faith in God paid off for the whole human race, since it was through her that Jesus came into our world.

Today marks the fourth Sunday of Advent. On the first Sunday of Advent, you made a plan - a program that would help you strengthen your heart so that your heart would be at its best to receive Jesus .

How have you done with that plan? Is it paying off for you?

Is your heart stronger? Are you more ready to receive Jesus ?

Is there still something left to do? God has told us all that there are wonderful things in store for those who believe.

Would you be willing to stake your life on your belief in God?

Light all four candles on your Advent wreath.

Pray: "Come, Lord Jesus , strengthen my heart, so that I might live as you desire. Give me the grace to always follow you. I ask your blessings on my family, my friends and on all Your People. Amen."



Day 23 – Monday, December 22

Samuel 1:24-28; Luke 1:46-56

"The Mighty One has done great things for me and holy is His name." Luke 1:49

There are some foods that are touted to be almost miracle foods - they do great things for us like lower our cholesterol or prevent cancer or reduce the effects of aging. If only we eat enough of the right foods, good things are in store for us.

In today's gospel, Mary says that God is like the cure for high blood pressure and strokes and whatever else might ail our hearts. That God is the Mighty One who can do great things for us. God can cure the hardening of our arteries that comes from holding grudges, God can cure the cancer of bitterness or revenge, God can even reduce the effects of our bad decisions.

What great things has God done in your life or in the life of someone you know?

When do you take the time to stop and recognize what God is doing in your life, even now?

Is there something in your life that you need the Mighty One's help with now?

If you haven't already decided, plan now which Christmas Mass you will attend.



Day 24 – Tuesday, December 23

Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Luke 1:57-66

"Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the Way before me." Malachi 3:1

Advertisements, commercials, samples at the grocery store. All of these are ways that manufacturers prepare the way for us to buy their product. Even if we don't need it, we sometimes want it, because the way has been so carefully prepared.

God sent the prophets to prepare the Way for his Son. This Advent, you have been preparing the way, strengthening your heart to welcome Jesus at Christmas time. But more than that, we prepare our hearts to receive Jesus at the end of the world. To welcome Jesus at his second coming. During Advent we remember the coming of Christ in history and anticipate his coming in glory.

How are you helping to prepare the world for the coming of Jesus Christ ?

What kind of advertisement would you make for the Savior?

Who are you trying to sell on the Kingdom of God ?

Our family Mass is tomorrow at 5:30 PM ; and evening Mass is at 10:00 PM. Christmas morning Mass is at 10 AM .

Day 25 – Wednesday, December 24

Morning Readings

2 Samuel 7:1-5; 8b-12, 14a, 16; Luke 1:67-79

"To guide our feet into the path of peace." Luke 1:79

It's Christmas Eve today. The last day of our 25 days to strengthen our hearts.

Are you ready to welcome Jesus ?

Are you ready to walk on the path of peace? The peace that comes only when our hearts are truly alive and in love with Jesus .

Our Family Mass is at 5:30 PM ; our evening Mass at 10:00 PM. Christmas morning at 10 AM .

Maranatha ! Come, Lord Jesus !

Christmas Readings

Isaiah 9:1-6; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 2:1-14

"She wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger, because there was no

room for them in the inn."

Ironic, isn't it, that Jesus who was with God the Father at the creation of the world, couldn't find a place on this earth to be born?

Today, as with everyday, Jesus is seeking to be born in your heart. Jesus , who was with God the Father at your creation, is asking for space in your heart, in your life.

Are you ready to receive him?

Or would you rather that he just stay that baby in Bethlehem - in a manger far away?

Marannatha !

Come, Lord Jesus !

***Strengthen our hearts so that we might welcome you in true
love and thanksgiving.***





The Advent wreath dates back to ancient celebrations of the winter solstice—that time in the year when the sun reaches its southern-most point in the heavens and the days are the darkest and most gloomy. Because they longed for the return of the sun's light and life, the ancients stopped all usual activity, sacrificed the use of their wagon wheels and hung them up, festooned with lights and greens in their celebration halls. There they awaited the return of their sun-god, thinking of the warmth and life he brought. Celebrations culminated in the "nativity" of the sun—the turning point of the year.

As Christians, we use the same meaningful custom to anticipate the feast of light and life; the nativity of the Savior. We add one light on the wreath for each Sunday in Advent. We think of the darkness after Adam's sin and watch the growing hope and light as the prophets and the Virgin help us prepare for His saving birth.