



ADVENT: WEEK I

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 1 – SATURDAY, DECEMBER 7

For the past 18 months the Diocese of Gaylord has been involved in an extensive process leading us to discern a Mutually Shared Vision for the Roman Catholic Church in Northern Lower Michigan. On November 24, 2013, which closed the “Year of Faith,” the diocese released a vision document titled, “Shining Christ’s Light; Sunrise to Sunset,” sharing insights gained through the process and revealing a plan for the future. The entire document is available at parish offices and on the diocesan website at www.dioceseofgaylord.org.

As we begin this season of Advent, a time of waiting and preparation, this weekly series of daily reflections has been created to help us as we await the coming of Christ. In our diocese, we are also waiting and preparing for the appointment of a new bishop. Based on Holy Scriptures and drawing from the five core values highlighted in “Shining Christ’s Light: Sunrise to Sunset,” these materials may be used for personal or group study.

Prayer and Worship: We are called to pray always, as a Church formed and sustained by the Eucharist, giving praise to the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

“From the rising of the sun to its setting, may the name of the Lord be praised!” (Psalm 113.3)

As St. Paul reminded the Thessalonians, we are called to “pray without ceasing” and to “give thanks in all circumstances.” (I Thessalonians 5:17-18) The development of that posture of constant prayer and that attitude of gratitude is foundational for our mission. The Gospels give us a powerful example in the very person of Jesus, who is consistently presented as a man of prayer. He prayed for strength and courage. He prayed in quiet and in thanksgiving. He prayed regularly in community. He instructed us about prayer and indeed taught us to pray, giving us the “Our Father.”

It was Jesus, moreover, who gave us the Eucharist, the most perfect prayer, which allows us to be one with Him in giving praise to the Father in the unity of the Holy Spirit. It was Jesus, in fact, who instituted each of the seven sacraments; those outward signs that actually confer the grace they signify.

It is no surprise, then, that the Church should be so

concerned with prayer and liturgy. That is certainly our heritage in the Diocese of Gaylord. Recognizing that it is the Eucharist that forms the Church, our first Bishop, Cardinal Edmund Szoka, understood that one of his first tasks would be to build a Cathedral that would embody the teachings of the Second Vatican Council on liturgy and the Eucharist and that would facilitate and encourage our common prayer. Our second bishop, Bishop Robert Rose, is still remembered as a man of prayer who celebrated the Eucharist with great reverence and inspired others to do the same. Bishop Patrick Cooney, our third bishop, built on that foundation and led the diocese in a sustained two-decade reflection on the liturgy that has blessed us with a reputation as a diocese with dynamic parish liturgies, particularly well-formed priests and liturgical ministers, and congregations that truly embrace the call to be a Eucharistic community and recognize that the Eucharist is the “source and summit of the Christian life.” (*Sacrosanctum Concilium* #10; and *Catechism* #1324) Our fourth bishop, Archbishop Bernard Hebda, invited us to renew and refocus ourselves in living out the mystery of the Eucharist in our everyday life situations.

From the listening sessions it was clear we need to do more to promote the Sacrament of Reconciliation as an encounter with God’s mercy. The listening sessions also revealed both a hunger for increased opportunities for prayer outside of Sunday Mass and a desire for a respect for the Church’s treasure chest of devotions, forms of prayer that have traditionally supported Catholics in the life of faith without in any way obscuring the importance of the Mass. In many parts of the diocese, the faithful have expressed a desire for the possibility of participation more regularly at daily Mass, for the Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and various types of devotions. Knowing we have more parishes than priests and recognizing that many of our parishes are small, it is going to be important that greater collaboration and coordination take place among neighboring parishes in the scheduling and sponsoring of liturgies and devotions.



Daily Reflections:

Sunday, December 1, 2013 – 1st Sunday of Advent

- **Scripture:** Come, let us climb the Lord's mountain, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may instruct us in his ways, and we may walk in his paths. (Isaiah 2:3)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "As St Paul reminded the Thessalonians, we are called to 'pray without ceasing' and to 'give thanks in all circumstances.'" (I Thessalonians 5:17-18)
- **For Reflection:** Are you praying and giving thanks so that you will always walk in His path? How can you add prayer and remember to give thanks for all that you have?

Monday, December 2, 2013 – Monday of the 1st Week of Advent

- **Scripture:** For over all, the Lord's glory will be shelter and protection: Shade from parching heat of day; Refuge and cover from and rain. (Isaiah 4:6)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "[The Lord] prayed for strength and courage. He prayed in quiet and in thanksgiving. He prayed regularly in community..."
- **For Reflection:** Do you pray for strength and courage or for shelter and protection? Do you pray regularly in community?

Tuesday, December 3, 2013 – St. Francis Xavier, Priest

- **Scripture:** On that day, a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse. (Isaiah 11:1)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "It is no surprise, then that the Church should be so concerned with prayer and liturgy. That is certainly our heritage in the Diocese of Gaylord."
- **For Reflection:** What else is the heritage of the Diocese of Gaylord? What other signals do you see?

Wednesday, December 4, 2013 – Wednesday of the 1st Week of Advent

- **Scripture:** On this mountain the Lord of hosts will provide for all peoples. (Isaiah 25:6)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "It is going to be important that we encourage greater collaboration and coordination take place among neighboring parishes in the scheduling and sponsoring of liturgies and devotions."
- **For Reflection:** Has your parish had coordination with other neighboring parishes? Does your parish have an outreach programs for people in your community?

Thursday, December 5, 2013 – Thursday of the 1st Week of Advent

- **Scripture:** 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)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "In many parts of the diocese, the faithful have expressed a desire for the possibility of participation more regularly at daily Mass, for the Exposition and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, and various types of devotions."
- **For Reflection:** Have you attended Eucharistic Adoration? Do you volunteer to lead various services in your Church?

Friday, December 6, 2013 – Friday of the 1st Week of Advent

- **Scripture:** On that day the deaf shall hear the words of a book; And out of gloom and darkness, the eyes of the blind shall see. (Isaiah 29:18)
- **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "The listening sessions also revealed both a hunger for increased opportunities for prayer outside of Sunday Mass and a desire for a respect for the Church's treasure chest of devotions."
- **For Reflection:** Which of the prayers in the Church's treasure chest of devotions have you found beneficial for you and your family?

Saturday, December 7, 2013 – St. Ambrose, Bishop and Doctor of the Church

- **Scripture:** He will be gracious to you when you cry out, as soon as he hears he will answer you. (Isaiah 30:20)
 - **From a Mutually Shared Vision:** "A sustained two-decade reflection on the liturgy that has blessed us with a reputation as a diocese with dynamic parish liturgies, particularly well-formed priests and liturgical ministers, and congregations that truly embrace the call to be a Eucharistic community and recognize that the Eucharist is the "source and summit of the Christian life."
 - **For Reflection:** How do you and members of your parish community continue to make the Eucharist the source and summit of your Christian life? How can you help others in this call to be a Eucharistic people?
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