First Sunday of Advent
28 November 2021

The Annunciation (detail), 1898
Henry Ossawa Tanner
**Prelude | Nun komm, der Heiden Heiland**

*Nikolaus Bruhns*  
(1665-1697)

**Entrance Procession | My Soul in Stillness Waits**

*Marty Haugen*

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**Refrain**

For you, O Lord, my soul in stillness waits, truly my hope is in you.

**Verses**

1. O Lord of Light, our only hope of glory, your radiance shines in all who look to us, and in your advent, draw us all to

2. O Spring of Joy, your thirsty hearts are yearning for your spirits, we ever seek, yet unfilled remade us, let every heart be opened to the heavens, Creator of the mountains and the you, come, light the hearts of all in dark and

3. O Root of Life, implant your seed with hope reborn in dying and in main, open to us the pathway of your Lord, for we are all the people of his seas, Lord of the stars, and present to us shadow.

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**Call to Worship**

* In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.  
  All: Amen.

* The Lord be with you.  
  All: And with your spirit.

**Penitential Rite**
COLLECT

LITURGY OF THE WORD

FIRST READING | Jeremiah 33: 14-16

RESPONSORIAL PSALM | Ps. 25: To You, O Lord

Verses

1. Lord, make me know your ways, teach me your paths
   and keep me in the way of your truth, for you are God, my Savior.

2. For the Lord is good and righteous, revealing the way to those who wander,
   gently leading the poor and the humble.

3. To the ones who seek the Lord, who look to God’s word, who live God’s love,
   God will always be near, and will show them mercy.

SECOND READING | 1 Thessalonians 3: 12-4: 2

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION | Jubilation Mass


HOMILY
Nicene Creed

I believe in one God,
the Father almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all things visible and invisible.
I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ,
the Only Begotten Son of God,
born of the Father before all ages.
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father;
through him all things were made.
For us men and for our salvation
he came down from heaven,
and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary,
and became man.
For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate,
he suffered death and was buried,
and rose again on the third day
in accordance with the Scriptures.
He ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory
to judge the living and the dead
and his kingdom will have no end.
I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.
I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.
I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins
and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

Universal Prayer
THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROUS SUPPORT OF THE PARISH!

We are grateful for your ongoing support of Saint Cecilia. The easiest way to make a financial contribution to our parish is to use the parish Flowcode below.

Using the Flowcode with the camera on your smartphone is as easy as Aim & Tap. Aim your camera at the Flowcode image and tap the notification banner when it appears on your phone’s screen. You may need to zoom in a bit to focus on the code.

If the Flowcode doesn’t work for you, please visit www.flowcode.com/page/stceciliaboston.

You can also mail a check to:

Saint Cecilia Parish
18 Belvidere Street
Boston, MA 02115
Eucharistic Prayer

- The Lord be with you.
  All: And with your spirit.

- Lift up your hearts.
  All: We lift them up to the Lord.

- Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
  All: It is right and just.

SANCTUS | Mass of the Angels and Saints

Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might, heav’n and earth are full of your glory.

Hosanna, hosanna, hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord. Hosanna, hosanna.
MEMORIAL ACCLAMATION | Mass of the Angels and Saints

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
All: And with your spirit.

AMEN | Mass of the Angels and Saints

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation but deliver us from evil. For the kingdom, the power, and the glory are yours now and forever. Amen.

THE EXCHANGE OF PEACE

The peace of the Lord be with you always.
All: And with your spirit.
SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

It is a long-held Catholic belief that when circumstances prevent one from receiving Holy Communion, it is possible to make an “Act of Spiritual Communion.” During this time when we are not able to celebrate the Eucharist together in person, Pope Francis invites Catholics to say this prayer as a source of grace. We can be assured that when we express our desire to receive Jesus in the Eucharist, God will be with us spiritually in a special way. Here is an Act of Spiritual Communion that we encourage you to pray as you participate in our live-streamed liturgies:

ACT OF SPIRITUAL COMMUNION

Loving Jesus,
I believe that you
are present in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist.
I love you above all things,
and I desire to receive you into my soul.
Since I cannot at this moment receive you sacramentally,
come at least spiritually into my heart.
I embrace you as if you were already there
and unite myself wholly to you.
Never permit me to be separated from you.
Amen.
COMMUNION | Canticle of the Turning

Rory Cooney

Verses

1. My soul cries out with a joyful shout that the
2. Though I am small, my God, my all, you
3. From the halls of power to the fortress tower, not a
4. Though the nations rage from age to age, we re-

God of my heart is great, And my spirit sings of the
work great things in me, And your mercy will last from the
stone will be left on stone, Let the king beware for your
member who holds us fast: God’s mercy must de-

wondrous things that you bring to the ones who
depths of the past to the end of the age to
justice tears every tyrant from his
liv er us from the conqueror’s crushing

wait. You fixed your sight on your servant’s plight, and my
be. Your very name puts the proud to shame, and to
throne. The hungry poor shall weep no more, for the
grap. This saving word that our forebears heard is the

weak ness you did not spurn, So from east to west shall my
those who would for you yearn, You will show your might, put the
food they can never earn; There are tables spread, every
promise which holds us bound, ‘Til the spear and rod can be

name be blest. Could the world be about to turn?
strong to flight, for the world is about to turn.
mouth be fed, for the world is about to turn.
crushed by God, who is turning the world around.

Refrain

My heart shall sing of the day you bring. Let the

fires of your justice burn. Wipe away all tears, for the
dawn draws near, and the world is about to turn!
CONCLUDING RITES

★ The Lord be with you.
   All: And with your spirit.

★ May almighty God bless you, the Father, (+) and the Son and the Holy Spirit.
   All: Amen.

★ Go forth, the Mass is ended.
   All: Thanks be to God.

RECESSIONAL | The King Shall Come When Morning Dawns

MORNING SONG

For information on becoming involved or supporting the music program at Saint Cecilia, please contact Dr. Robert Duff at 617-536-4548 or email: RDuff@stceciliaboston.org.

Music in this worship aid is printed with permission under Onelicense.net #A700-137.
Saint Cecilia Parish Advent Giving Tree!

The 2021 Advent Giving Tree Supports these Agencies & Programs

**Saint Cecilia CARES** is a home visitation program with ministers who visit the homes of the sick, isolated, and needy members of our parish and the surrounding community. Ministers provide the gifts of compassionate listening, pastoral presence, emotional support, and Holy Communion if requested.

**Saint Cecilia Prison & After Program** provides a support group for men coming out of prison. Presently, the group shares inspirational emails, 1:1 buddy-style phone relationships and a monthly virtual book group.

**Elders Living at Home Program** provides supportive services to older adults with the goal of helping them maintain their independence in safe, affordable permanent housing for as long as possible.

**Women’s Lunch Place (WLP)** is a unique daytime shelter and advocacy center in Boston dedicated to helping women in need. Advocates provide healthy meals, essentials, and one-on-one assistance to guests, and free medical services from Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program.

**Haley House** uses food with purpose and the power of community to break down barriers between people, empower individuals, and strengthen neighborhoods. We believe in radical solutions: solving problems at their root by challenging attitudes that perpetuate suffering and building alternative models.

**Project Hope** ensures the holidays are joyous and cheerful for hundreds of Boston’s children and families. With your help, we can share joy with Project Hope families and ease stress for parents purchasing gifts.

**Boston Health Care for the Homeless Program (BHCHP)** serves over 11,000 homeless individuals and families. BHCHP ensures every one of these individuals and families have access to comprehensive health care. During winter months, those on the streets and in shelters often lack the very basic clothing necessary to stay warm and dry.

**Catholic Charities Yawkey Childhood Center** is a diverse center based community which provides a safe, clean, healthy environment for children from age 6 weeks to 7 years.

**Waltham House** is the first residential group home designed specifically for LGBTQ youth in New England, and one of only three of its kind in the nation. The group home provides a safe and supportive living environment for 12 gay, lesbian, bisexual, and/or transgender youth ages 14-18.

**LGBT Asylum Task Force** assists LGBTQ people from one of the 71 countries in which it is a crime to be LGBTQ to obtain asylum in the United States. Provides housing, food, pro bono legal services, mental health counseling, medical health services, employment services, and other services.

**Saint Cecilia Parish Advent Giving Tree!**

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As you can see, our beautiful Advent Giving Tree has arrived! Our team was busy yesterday making tags for agencies and individuals who have reached out to us again this year.

This year there are two ways to purchase gifts: taking a tag from the Advent Giving Tree in the church OR by using the VIRTUAL method online.

### Option 1: Giving Tree at Church
- Select one or more tags from the tree and purchase the item(s).
- Please DO NOT take a tag unless you intend to purchase the gift.
- Wrap the gift (unless the tag indicates not to) and attach the tag securely to the outside.
- You are welcome to add to the purchase. For example, if someone needs a winter hat, you could include gloves, scarf, or holiday candy, etc. For some people this is the only gift they receive.
- If the gift is unavailable/out of stock a gift card may be substituted.
- If you change your mind, simply return the tag to a Giving Tree Coordinator as soon as possible.
- If you lose the tag, please inform a Giving Tree Coordinator.
- Bring your gift(s) to the parish NO LATER than 6:00 PM on Wednesday, December 15th.

### Option 2: VIRTUAL Giving Tree Online
You can purchase gifts online from the Virtual Advent Giving Tree to be shipped directly to agencies in need, or in some cases dropped off at the parish.

- Please visit the link to see the requests from the agencies we are supporting:
  - [https://signup.com/go/stceciliaadventgivingtree](https://signup.com/go/stceciliaadventgivingtree)
- Select your gift(s) and follow instructions for shipping and delivery. Be sure to include the listed c/o (‘in care of’) information.
- For Gift Cards choose a **physical card** vs. an ‘E-card’ (electronic) card (*Project Hope* is an exception to this rule).
- Any online seller can be used or you may purchase the gift at a store and mail it.
- **Parish drop-off for gifts is limited.** Please read the description to see if this is an option for the gift you choose. If bringing a gift to the parish be sure to clearly indicate the agency it is for.
- If the gift is unavailable/out of stock a gift card may be substituted.
- Please order and ship gifts so it will arrive at the listed agency or the Parish before Wednesday, December 15th.
**MINISTERS OF THE LITURGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Celebrant</th>
<th>Lector(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Saturday, November 20</strong></td>
<td>5:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Rev. Peter Grover, OMV</td>
<td>Catherine Horsley, lector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, November 21</strong></td>
<td>8:00 a.m.</td>
<td>Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ</td>
<td>Emily St. Germain, lector</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, November 21</strong></td>
<td>9:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Rev. John J. Unni</td>
<td>Natsha Bolton-Pierre, Letitia Howland, and Rosaria Salerno, lectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, November 21</strong></td>
<td>11:30 a.m.</td>
<td>Rev. John J. Unni</td>
<td>Kevin Dumas and Kathleen Egan, lectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sunday, November 21</strong></td>
<td>6:00 p.m.</td>
<td>Rev. John J. Unni</td>
<td>Virgen Palermo and Cynthia Wanner, lectors</td>
</tr>
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**SPECIAL INTENTIONS**

- **Saturday, November 27** | **9:30 a.m.**
  - Chuck Botosh, *Memorial*
  - Mary & Joseph Maciora, and Mary Maciora Jacobs, *Memorial*

- **Sunday, November 28**  | **9:30 a.m.**
  - Dan Mullen, *1st Anniversary*
  - Robert T. Cahill, *7th Anniversary*
  - Kathleen Corcoran, *Memorial*

- **Sunday, November 28**  | **11:30 a.m.**
  - Scott I. Opatosky, *Memorial*

- **Friday, December 3**   | **6:00 p.m.**
  - John P. Karle, *Memorial*, *Memorial*

**THIS SUNDAY’S READINGS**

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

**NEXT SUNDAY’S READINGS**

- Baruch 5:1–9
- Philippians 1:4–6, 8–11
- Luke 3:1–6
PRAYERS & OCCASIONS

Our Sick
Please pray for all our sick and for those who are in need of our prayer, especially Mary Pickering, Caeden Boyce, Delia Alvarez, Charlie Naughton, Peter Tracy, MaryAnn Weber, Bob Haas, Bob Roppolo, Christopher Gobron, Joy Gilbert, Mary Walters, John Powers, Marc Pelletier, Larry Murphy, Josephine Mason, Marian Licameli, Ray Cronin, Rosalind Sica, Nicholas Collins, Eileen Bolesky, and Fred Anzalone.

Happy Anniversary!
This week we celebrate the baptismal anniversaries of Frank LaPiana who was baptized on November 26, and Carly Caminiti who was baptized on December 1. May the Lord continue to bless them with the grace to live out their baptismal call. Happy Feast Day, Frank and Carly!

Second Collection
Today’s second collection is used to assist religious communities to provide for the retirement and health care needs of Sisters who have served in the Archdiocese. Please take this opportunity to say thank you to the Sisters who have served the Church of Boston so generously for so many years. Your contribution does make a difference. To make a donation please visit:  www.osvhub.com/stciceliaboston/funds/collection-for-retired-religious-sisters.

Anniversary of Four U.S. Churchwomen Martyred in El Salvador — December 2, 1980
The word "martyr" is derived from the same Greek word as "witness" and for Maura Clarke, Ita Ford, Dorothy Kazel, and Jean Donovan, their witness to serving the poor indeed led to their deaths. Forty-one years ago this Thursday, Ursuline Sister Dorothy Kazel and lay missioner Jean Donovan drove their van to the El Salvador airport and picked up Maryknoll Sisters Maura Clarke and Ita Ford. Members of El Salvador's National Guard stopped their van and they were taken to an isolated location where they were sexually and physically abused before being brutally murdered. Pray for all victims of violence and for all who put themselves in harm's way at the service of the Gospel.

Hanukkah—Judaism's Festival of Lights
Hanukkah begins at sunset today, November 28. We remember our Jewish siblings as they kindle the first candle of the menorah and begin their eight–day celebration of light.

Anniversary of the Death of Dorothy Day
Tomorow, November 29, marks the forty-first anniversary of the death of Servant of God Dorothy Day. Pray for all who dedicate themselves to upholding the principles of the Catholic Worker Movement. More than 185 Catholic Worker communities remain committed to nonviolence, voluntary poverty, prayer, and hospitality for the homeless, exiled, hungry, and forsaken. Catholic Workers continue to protest injustice, war, racism, and violence in all its forms. Pray also for those who show hospitality to the poor and for all who work to uphold the God given dignity of every human person.

Evening Prayer
Join us on our Facebook page Tuesday, November 30 at 6:30 p.m. for Evening Prayer for the Feast of Saint Andrew. If you don't have Facebook please email Mark at sc.hoursandtaize@gmail.com for the Zoom information.

Advent Candles For Sale
Advent begins at sunset on Saturday, November 27, so it’s time to create an Advent wreath at home. A nice custom is to set-up the wreath on your dinner table. Beginning this week, we'll include a prayer of blessing that can be said during the lighting of the candle(s). This Sunday we will be selling sets of Advent candles for $10 in the reception area downstairs.

Be Sure to Take Home a Little Blue Book for Advent
Six minutes a day. That's what you might consider giving during the seasons of Advent and Christmastide. The Little Blue Book includes daily reflections based on the Sunday Gospels for Cycle C. These books are in baskets in the rear of the church, and can also be ordered directly from their website at littlebooks.org. They are available in paper and ebook formats. This is a great way to keep Advent and prepare for the coming of the Lord at Christmas.

Christmas Flowers
You are invited to remember your loved ones by donating towards the Christmas flowers that will grace our sanctuary. In the back of the church you'll find envelopes that you can use for this purpose. Please drop the envelope in the collection basket or hand it to any staff person. The names of those remembered will be published in the Christmas bulletin. Please be sure to PRINT clearly.
SAINT CECILIA PARISH

ADVENT

THE ADVENT WREATH

Advent wreaths were originally part of folk traditions of Northern Europe. Wreaths of evergreens were decorated with candles to symbolize life and light during the dark months of winter. The circle of the wreath, which has no beginning or end, symbolizes the eternity of God. Evergreens stay green all year and so signify continuous life. Each of the four candles represents one of the Sundays of Advent. We needn’t worry about the colors of the candles; traditionally, three violet candles and one rose candle are used, but you may prefer to use all royal blue candles, four violet candles or four white candles. The symbol is the flame, not the color. Each Sunday, the light of the wreath glows brighter as a reminder that Christ comes into the darkness of our lives to bring newness, life, and hope.

Tonight, light the first candle, sing a verse of O Come, O Come, Emmanuel, re-read part of today’s Gospel, and say a brief concluding prayer. If you prefer, here is a prayer that you can use.

FIRST WEEK

Light one of the violet candles. During the rest of the week, this candle is relit at the evening meal or whenever you choose to do so.

Jesus, as we wait for your coming, help us not to be afraid and to trust in you. As we light this candle, we remember that you bring the light of hope into our lives. May your Word be always in our minds, on our lips, and in our hearts.

Amen.

LGBTQ+ CATHOLICS UNITE MONTHLY MEETING

Sunday, November 28 | 1:30 p.m. | Community Room and Zoom Virtual Meeting

This month Fr. Jay Woods, OFM will facilitate a discussion on “An Advent of Hope: The LGBTQ+ Community Reflected in the Christmas Story.” Fr. Jay will lead a discussion on how the revival of Most Holy Redeemer Church (San Francisco) and St. Patrick-St. Anthony Church (Hartford) during the HIV/AIDS pandemic led to communities of love, inclusion, and hope. How is the LGBTQ+ community in an advent of hope for a more inclusive Roman Catholic Church during the COVID-19 pandemic? Fr. Jay is a Franciscan Friar of the Holy Name Province and is ministering at St. Anthony Shrine, where he is the director of the Shrine’s LGBTQ+ ministry. LGBTQ Catholics Unite hosts meetings and events where people share faith experiences, thoughts, beliefs, and feelings while being supported, heard, and spiritually nourished. All are welcome—including allies! If you are interested in how to connect via Zoom, please email stceciliarainbowministry@gmail.com.

WORLD AIDS DAY

As part of our annual observance of World AIDS Day, our AIDS Memorial Quilt will be displayed in the rear of the church next weekend. The solemn reading of the names inscribed on the Quilt will take place at the 11:30 Mass. This custom, begun at the Jesuit Urban Center in 1995 and continued at Saint Cecilia following the closure of the Jesuit Urban Center, honors the lives of men and women that were cut short by HIV/AIDS. Following the 11:30 liturgy on December 5, the Rainbow Ministry will host a reception in the Community Room. Refreshments will be served and there will be a discussion of the history of both the epidemic and of our Quilt. When you come to church that weekend, be sure to spend a few moments in prayer before this powerful visual reminder of souls from both the JUC and Saint Cecilia communities.

SAINT CECILIA SOCIAL AND RACIAL JUSTICE MINISTRY BOOK CLUB

Every Other Wednesday | 5:45-6:50 p.m. | Zoom

The Anti-Racist Book Club is reading Begin Again: James Baldwin’s America and Its Urgent Lessons for Our Own by Eddie S. Glaude Jr. We meet every 2 weeks. Please join our club on the BookClubz platform to get access to announcements, and meeting days and times: https://bookclubz.com/clubs/17366/join/7c4bc6/ Members of all faith communities and denominations are welcome.
AN AFGHAN FAMILY IS ARRIVING SOON AND WE NEED YOUR SUPPORT!

Six weeks ago parishioners from the Paulist Center and Saint Cecilia began organizing to jointly sponsor an Afghan refugee family. This week we received preliminary approval for sponsoring a family of 5-6 people. The family is due to arrive within 2-3 weeks! Now comes the challenge to welcome this family, help them navigate through complex government programs, enroll their children in school, prepare them to find work, help them learn English, and much, much more.

Right now the most critical challenge is raising $10,000 by December 1 to pay the initial costs of housing and utilities, food, clothing, transportation, school supplies, and all the necessities of daily living. Eventually the family will be eligible for some U.S. government benefits, but even with those we may need to provide more than $20,000 for rent alone and an additional $25,000 for other living expenses.

If you wish to donate by check, make it payable to “Catholic Charities” and write: “PC-SC POWIR, Afghan” on the memo line. (POWIR stands for Parishes Organizing to Welcome Immigrants and Refugees.) Please mail your check to Catholic Charities, 275 West Broadway, Boston, MA 02127, attention: Marjean Perhot.

To donate online go to www.ccab.org/donate and under “Designation” use the drop down menu and select “Other”. In the resulting window type “Paulist Center St. Cecilia POWIR, Afghan”.

You can also sign up to volunteer with our refugee family at bit.ly/POWIRvolunteer Please contact us with any questions: sc.socialracialjustice@gmail.com. Thank you for your generosity!

![Adult Faith Formation Virtual Events](image)

SAINT SUSANNA PARISH — DEDHAM

**Having Difficult Conversations**

Presenter: - Fr. John Predmore S.J., Boston College High School  
Monday, December 13 | 7:00 - 9:00 p.m. | Zoom

For further details on this presentation, please check the website: https://www.saintsusanna.org/Attachments/aff_yearly_program_standard.pdf

![Faith & Film Series](image)

**LITTLE WOMEN**

NEXT SATURDAY, DECEMBER 4, 6:00 P.M.

From writer-director Greta Gerwig comes a beautiful new interpretation of Louisa May Alcott’s classic nineteenth century coming-of-age novel. The story follows the four March sisters growing up in Massachusetts in the backdrop of the Civil War as they deal with themes of love and loss and finding their own way in the world. This film is a smart and thoughtful adaptation with an impressive cast, including Saoirse Ronan (who also starred in Greta Gerwig’s film Lady Bird), Emma Watson, Laura Dern, and Timothée Chalamet. Film critic Jack King calls Little Women “One of the best films of the year; it’s a tonic for recent depressing events.”

The film will be shown in Fellowship Hall following the 5:00 Mass on Saturday (approximately 6:00 p.m.).

Pizza and popcorn will be served during the movie. Following the film there will be a short discussion for those who are interested. Face coverings are required except while eating.
I remember a bright string of tail-lights stretching out in front of us on the freeway as we drove home after dark. We had spent a long summer day in my grandparent’s pool with an army of cousins — a collective parenting strategy of peace by exhaustion that I can now appreciate as a middle-aged uncle. On the ride home I sat in the back seat of our VW bus, my vision blurred from an overdose of chlorinated pool water, California sun, and good ol’ fashioned fatigue.

A trail of red and white lights traced the way home through the dark hills of Brea Canyon. It seemed to me like a peppermint stick or candy cane that someone forgot to twist. I remember it now as a moment of authentic wonder — a summer memory, with a Christmas flavor.

***

Are we there yet? No. It’s barely Thanksgiving. But even now, at the edge of Advent [Catholic faux pas alert], I’m thinking of Christmas — just as I was in the string of summer traffic in the back of that VW bus. And now, as then, I’m tired, I’m far from home, and my vision is blurred. Red-cups and culture wars, racism and refugees, terrorism and endless war. The child in me waits for Christmas. The adult wonders who will make it happen.

At no other time do we feel simultaneously so old and so much a child than at the holidays. Our waiting and our wanting overwhelm us. The not-yet-happened and the happened-long-ago erupt in our hearts at the scent of candles and cookies. But also in the sadness we feel as we read the morning news, the pinch of realizing that the world is not at peace, the kingdom not yet come, the child still in exile, the wise ones still en route. We feel more the distance and the darkness, the longing and the loneliness, a child’s hope in a weary world: We’re not there yet.

***

I was sitting alone at the top of the stairs in the dark early morning and looking down into a living room flooded with the soft light of our Christmas tree. Someone had left the lights on overnight, a fire-hazard to be sure, but my favorite childhood hazard by far. Those little lights on the huge tree in our living room made the most ordinary space special.

And it was huge. My father insisted that our tree reach the very top of our 12-foot-tall vaulted ceiling; and, trees being as they are, height comes with girth so, you can imagine. We did our Christmas tree shopping in places normally reserved for banks or, I don’t know, Rockefeller Center. The installation process involved bicycle hooks and hanging wire, lots of sap and an occasional chip of paint or drop of blood. Every year we marked the season with this outrageous gesture and made sacred the place in which we lived our normal lives day in and day out.

I remember most the lights. There is something about the gathering of small lights — harvest lanterns, prayer lamps, vigil candles, stars — something about the little things and the soft that remind us of the strength of tenderness and the delicate enchantment of real beauty. I sat there for some time. I have no idea why I was awake. But there I was, before the same old living room, totally alone and silent, feeling very present and far far away all at once.

***

There’s always tension this time of year and if we take Advent seriously, maybe it’s seasonally appropriate. But we ought to avoid confusing cultural tension (the war on ‘x’) for liturgical
tension (the mystery of ‘here, but not yet’). For if there is to be a holy tension it’s never meant to divide us, to exclude us, or to break us. It’s meant to hold us. That’s important. A divine tension is always meant to hold us — like a lover’s arms, like a mother’s embrace, like a hammock in the shade on a warm sandy beach. Divine tension, a deeply restorative tension, is always healing.

It’s important to remember that Advent is only possible because Christmas has already happened. I’m reminded of what philosopher Hannah Arendt calls our natality — the fact of our birth, our capacity for spontaneity, our human state of here-but-not-yet potential. In our natality the ordinary and the divine find a redemptive unity. The unthinkable is made possible. The forgotten become the most important. The vulnerable possess a real power. We’re not there yet. But we’re held in hope and our faith is one of witness. The nativity is already a reality.

***

Every year we took the lights and ornaments down and put them back in their boxes after first wrapping them in excessive amounts of toilet paper (archaeologists of the future will delight in my mother’s rubber tubs full of mummified Santas). It would all go into hiding again, waiting to be unwrapped in a year’s time. And this was for me the real gift of Christmas. The same old toys wrapped and unwrapped every year with what felt like an ever-new joy — both a sweet memory and a sacred hope.

Theologically we call this an eschatological moment, a moment where we experience the end of things and their fullness, a moment where we are reminded that eternity is not as distant as it is ever-present. It’s tricky, but Advent plays the game well. We’re not there yet. But here? Absolutely.

In many places Advent is marked by lighting four candles, one at a time, over the course of four weeks – a gentle reminder of the magic, the mystery of what it means to say that God is present in our longing, born in our vulnerability, revealed in our fragile humanity. So, make your lists, check them twice, light your candles, start your countdown-calendar, for the child is here, if even not yet. And if, for whatever reason, you find yourself exhausted, far from home, sitting in traffic with watery eyes, look to the horizon and know that even here, even now, even in this sad little moment, you can find all the light you need.

~ Brendan Busse, SJ served as a Jesuit Volunteer in Belize and worked in Campus Ministry at LMU as the director of Community Service and Social Justice before joining the Jesuits. He was ordained a priest in 2017.

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SAINT CECILIA PARISH

PARISH RESOURCES

Parish Office & Mailing Address
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Phone | 617 536 4548; Fax | 617 536 1781
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Website | www.stceciliaboston.org

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Rev. James Shaughnessy, SJ, Pastoral Support
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Assisting Clergy
Rev. Terrence Devino, SJ
Rev. Peter Grover, OMV
Rev. Peter Gyves, SJ

Schedule for Liturgy
Wednesdays, Thursdays, & Fridays | 8:00 a.m.
Lord’s Day | 8:00 a.m.; Sun 8:00, 9:30*, 11:30 a.m., 6:00 p.m.
Holy Days | 8:00 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.
* Please note that the 9:30 Mass is both in-person and livestreamed.

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA)
The Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults is the communal process through which non-baptized men and women become members of the Catholic Church. It is also suitable for those baptized in different faith traditions who are interested in becoming Catholic, or, for those who were baptized Catholic, but have yet to receive the sacraments of Eucharist and confirmation.

Baptism for Infants
Infant baptism is celebrated on the first Sunday of the month. For more information, please contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office.

Faith Formation for Children
To register your child for our Faith Formation Program, please contact Scott MacDonald in the Parish Office.

Marriage
Couples who wish to prepare for marriage should contact Mark Donohoe in the Parish Office at least six months in advance.

Care of the Sick
To arrange for the Sacrament of the Sick, for Holy Communion to be brought to those unable to attend the Sunday celebration, or for Viaticum for the Dying (Holy Communion for those in danger of death), please contact the Parish Office. It is always possible to anoint the sick during regularly scheduled liturgies.

Order of Christian Funerals
The parish is prepared to celebrate the Vigil (wake) in the church. Please contact the Parish Office for more information.

Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Team
The CAP Team is responsible for training all parish staff and volunteers in mandated reporting laws and the Protecting God’s Children program (VIRTUS). They also provide consultation and support to anyone in the parish who has concerns about reporting child abuse and neglect. Please contact Lois Flaherty (loisflaherty@gmail.com), Maria Roche (maria.roche15@gmail.com), Letitia Howland (l_howland@hotmail.com), or Erin Young (erin.t.young@gmail.com) if you have any questions or concerns.

For Those with Celiac Disease
If you have celiac disease, please let us know. We have a supply of low-gluten altar bread available for those who cannot tolerate gluten.

Hearing Assistance in Church
The church is equipped with an assistive listening system. If you would like to use one of the small receivers, please ask one of our greeters.

Building Accessibility
Both the church and Parish Hall Center are accessible by elevator.

Parking
There is discounted parking at The Hynes Auditorium Garage (located at 50 Dalton Street next to Bukowski’s Tavern), for $11, available on Sundays until 3:00 p.m., and $14 after 4:00 every day of the week. To take advantage of this discount, ask one of our greeters for a chaser ticket at Mass or ask a staff person during the week. Chaser tickets must be used at the machine at the exit gate. To obtain the discount, first place the ticket you received upon entering the garage into the machine, then follow it with the chaser ticket.

Joining Our Community
We’re happy that you’re with us! Our community offers a warm, spiritual home for a diverse group of Catholics. We come from many neighborhoods in and around Boston, but also have long distance parishioners from other states as well as well as other countries. If you are local, please introduce yourself to a staff member or drop in for coffee on Sunday. We invite both local and long distance individuals and families to fill out a new parishioner form on our website. No matter what your background or location, please know that you are always welcome at Saint Cecilia.
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