

*Prepare the way
for the
Lord,*

*make
straight
paths for him.*

Matthew 3:3

Our Lady of Lourdes

Second Sunday of Advent • December 10, 2006



Welcome to our Parish Family! New Parishioners are cordially invited to register as members of our parish family. Please call or visit our Parish Office.

Pastoral Team

Rev. Michael A. Vetrano

Pastor

Rev. Stanislaus Chukwube

Associate Pastor

Rev. Robert Scheckenback

Associate Pastor

Deacon John DeGuardi

Deacon Jack Meehan

Coordinator of Stewardship

Deacon John Teufel

Sr. Margaret Bickar

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Sr. Nancy Campkin

Director of Religious Education

Regina Ann Cioffi

School Principal

Jennifer Gallagher

Director of Youth Services

Carol M. Goetz

Parish Music Director

Sr. Diane Liona

Director of Religious Education

Vita Scorgia

Ministry Spiritual Director

John Sureau

Coordinator of Worship

Sr. Betty Toohig

Senior Ministry-SAGE

Anthony Trombino

Business Manager

Pastoral Council

Michael Abbruscato

Salomon Acosta

Regina Ann Cioffi

Jane Desthers

Stephen Frodell

Jen Gallagher

Anne Kerrigan

Maria Lucie (*co-chair*)

Mary McMahan

Doreen Spiller

Mary Steck

Fr. Mike Vetrano

Marie Yuliano (*co-chair*)

Parish Staff

Barbara Catusco

Religious Education Office

Mary Anne Lettieri

Parish Office

Debbie Meyer

Bulletin/Parish Office

Rosemary Multer

School Office

Rex Muro

Organist

Rita Spera

Religious Education Office

Lori Walsh

Parish Office

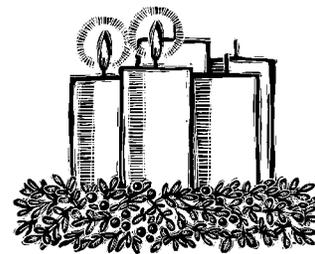
*Our Lady
of Lourdes*

455 Hunter Avenue
West Islip, New York 11795

Mission Statement

As stewards of all that God has given us, the Parish Family of Our Lady of Lourdes serves and ministers to all who come to this place. Regardless of a person's history, ethnicity, gender, orientation, age or race, we commit ourselves to open wide the doors of our Parish to provide a place of welcome and hospitality.

Second Sunday in Advent



Vision...

so that all may know that they are a vital part of the Body of Christ, we further recommit and challenge ourselves to:

- ***Live** out our Baptismal call passionately by caring for all of God's people with justice.*
- ***Grow** in an understanding of God's role in each of our lives.*
- ***Respond** to the Gospel in a radical way, inviting and inspiring all to form the Kingdom of God in every moment of life.*
- ***Acknowledge** we are not complete without the willingness to grow, discern and discover the Spirit who moves and guides us.*

Parish Office

661-3224

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 7:30 PM

Saturday: 9 AM - 3 PM

Sunday: 9 AM - 2 PM

email: ParishOffice@ollchurch.org

fax: 661-7143

website: www.ollchurch.org

Our Lady of Lourdes School

587-7200

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - 3 PM

email: rcioffi@ollschool.org

Religious Education Office

661-5440

Monday-Friday: 9 AM - Noon

1 PM - 5 PM

7 PM - 9 PM

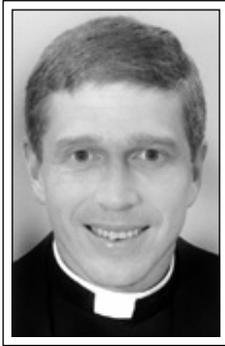
email: ReligiousEd@ollchurch.org

S.A.G.E.

661-3224

(Senior Advocates for Growth
and Enrichment)

email: Sage@ollchurch.org



Advent Evening Prayer

Feeling the pressure of the holidays?

...overwhelmed with the “busy”ness of the season?

Take some time for you. Come and join us at **Advent Evening Prayer** on **Monday, December 11** at **7:30 PM in the Church**. Our homilist will be Fr. Michael Holzmann, Chaplain at St. John the Baptist Diocesan High School and columnist for The Long Island Catholic.

Reconciliation During Advent

On Monday, December 18, come and experience the Sacrament of Reconciliation at Our Lady of Lourdes. Our priests will be in church from 3 PM to 9 PM to celebrate the sacrament of forgiveness and healing with you.

Prophets and Promises

This Advent, our Children’s Liturgy and Family Liturgy teams are going to help our young people focus on the prophets of Advent and the promises we are called to be a part of. Each week, our young people will reflect on the promises of peace, forgiveness and service and encounter some people who have worked to bring that about both in the times of the Bible and our lives today. Be sure to take a look at our Prophets and Promises newsletter that will be given out at the end of each Children’s Liturgy celebration.

If you have not been part of our 9:30 AM Liturgy, we celebrate the readings in a special way with young people from approximately age four to about fourth grade.

After the Opening Prayer, they journey to the Parish Center to hear God’s Word in a way that keeps the message but makes it a little more understandable for them.

If you have small children or are one yourself, consider coming to the 9:30 AM Liturgy one Sunday to find out more about this great experience for young people.

Advent at “The Six”

...*Prayin’, Preparin’ and Servin’*

This Advent, our parish’s “Six Committee” is working to bring the readings to life for young people and for all in this community. The readings challenge us to *pray* well, to *prepare* well and to *serve* well for the coming of Jesus in our lives at Christmas.

This can be especially hard in the world in which we live.

December 17 – we’ll try to bring it together in our reflection on the power of service. We’ll hear from people of all ages and ways of life and how they live out the call to justice and service. Prepare to be challenged to live your life in a different way!

Come and be part of it all and make Sunday nights during this busy time of the year, a special time for you!

Finding Peace in a Busy Season...

Mondays-December 11 and 18

9 AM - 10 AM in the Parish Center

Presenter: Rev. Michael A. Vetrano

Pastor, Our Lady of Lourdes



Advent Morning Mass Reflections

Come to morning Mass on Mondays in Advent. Our homily that day will introduce a theme for you to reflect on in the time after Mass. You will be able to use our morning rosary and prayer after Mass or just take time for your own reflection. At 9 AM, we will gather in the Parish Center for a talk and time for discussion. Coffee and rolls will be available.

(If you can't make 8 AM Mass-please feel free to join us at 9 AM.)

December 11 :: *What do I want for Christmas?*

Often we spend our advent thinking about what gifts we need and what gifts we will give. What, however, do we really need? And what can we really give?

We find surprising answers in the advent scriptures.

December 18 :: *"I will honor Christmas in my heart and try to keep it all the year."*

Lessons about Christmas from a modern day prophetic book - A Christmas Carol, by Charles Dickens.

Gentle Reminder: Preregistration is necessary and helpful This will enable us to have enough reading material and refreshments for all those attending. Please call the Religious Education Office Monday-Friday from 9 AM until 5 PM at 661.5440, extension 3 or email to religiouse@ollchurch.org. Fee is \$25 and may vary with each class. No fee is required for those who have paid Religious Education Family Fee or OLL School tuition.

Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults

What's it all about?

IF you are an adult AND

... you were never Baptized

... you were Baptized in another faith and would like to become a baptized Catholic

... you never received Holy Communion (Eucharist)

... you never received your Confirmation

IF you are an adult *and* one or all of the circumstances above apply to you

IF you feel you would like to become a Baptized Catholic or become more fully initiated into your Catholic faith,

please contact John Sureau, S. Nancy, Jen Gallagher or Fr. Stan at the Parish Office. You can call 661-3224, option #1, and we would be happy to help you!

Mass for Bereaved Parents

Saturday, December 16, 2006

OLL Church – 11 AM

The holidays are often times of great celebration. But, for many, particularly those who have lost a child, the holidays are painfully hard. They are a reminder of our losses and a reminder of how our lives are perhaps a little less full. Whether you have lost a child in childhood or adulthood, to stillbirth or miscarriage, this Mass will be celebrated to bring you God's peace and consolation.

We invite all who have lost a child to come and gather together for this special Mass on **Saturday, December 16 at 11 AM**. Mass will be followed by a luncheon. Please feel free to invite family or friends with you. For more information, or to let us know you will be able to attend, please call the Parish Office at 661.3224.

Let's pray that through prayer and coming together, the challenges of the holidays can become a little lighter and that we may be strengthened by God's love and presence.

The Music of the Holidays

The students of Our Lady of Lourdes School will present "**The Music of the Holidays**" concert on **Thursday, December 14 at 7:30 PM** in the **All Purpose Room**. All students K to 8 will be singing, the Band is performing and the Drama Club will present a short Nativity tableau.

The next **School Mass**, prepared by the fifth grade, will be on **Tuesday, December 19 at 9 AM**. All are invited.

Our **eighth grade students** in the **Academy of Inquiry** will meet for the second time with their Stony Brook mentors on December 13.

Our **Pre-K students** will perform some **Christmas songs** for their parents on **Wednesday, December 20**. Our four-year-olds have been practicing hard and can't wait to sing their hearts out.

Religious Education

Grade 6/7/8 Hang Out... Friday, December 15

Needs... any Christmas ornaments... "do dads"... ribbons... etc... we're fixing wreaths for our Giving Tree presents. Please drop off at Religious Education Office, or call, or email, and let us know you can give us some Christmas Decorations.

Thanks to Grade 7

Our students learn about our Parish Family and its ministries...

Grade 7 Service Projects so far...

- Hosting refreshments for the Mass of Remembrance with our Ministry of Consolation
- Helping with Night at the Races with Parish Outreach
- Giving out bread on Thanksgiving Day
- Organizing our new missalettes and music issues
- Making peanut butter and jelly sandwiches with our Social Action Ministry
- Putting Advent Tags on our Parish Giving Tree... and more to come...



It's that time of year! Christmas is on its way... In order that we may give those less fortunate in our area a "Merry Christmas", Parish Outreach along with other ministries here at OLL are putting together our annual "Giving Tree." Our "Giving Tree" will go up on Saturday, December 2. Our "Giving Tree" has tags that ask for gifts of toys, clothes, food certificates and clothing certificates. This year, we will use color coded tags to make our giving and sorting a little easier for our "elves."

blue tags are requests for donations of clothes
white tags are requests for donations of toys
yellow tags are requests for donations of food store certificates
green tags are requests for donations of clothing store certificates

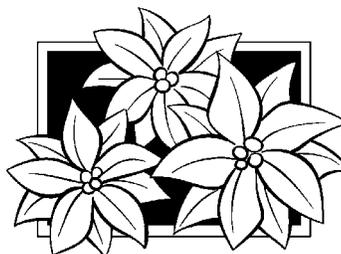
You can help by:

- taking a tag from our "Giving Tree",
- place the requested item in a box, with the tag attached, under the tree no later than **December 17**,
- all items should be left unwrapped, but feel free to provide wrapping paper and bow,
- if you are giving a gift certificate (food or clothing), you may return them by putting them in the collection basket, dropping them at the Parish Office or Parish Outreach during business hours. (Please, do not leave certificates under the tree.)

We are sure that you will join us in making this a Merry Christmas for all, and we thank you for your continued generosity. We wish you and your families a very Merry Christmas!

Christmas Flower Offerings

Christmas Flower offerings received by Sunday, December 10 will be published in the Christmas bulletin. Offerings received after that date, will be published in subsequent bulletins.





Please take a moment and visit our beautiful Church website for the latest information about Advent 2006. There is information about our "Giving Tree", Advent Monday Mornings, Christmas Shopping Day for El Salvador, Advent Evening of Prayer, and so much more! Visit us at www.ollchurch.org.

Senior Circle

The Senior Circle meets on the last Monday of each month. The next meeting will be held on **Monday, December 11, at 12:30 PM in the Parish Center.**

Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group

The Jesus, King of All Nations Prayer Group meets each **Thursday afternoon** in the **Church**. The meeting is from **3 PM until 4 PM** in **front of the Blessed Sacrament.**

Good Samaritan Prayer Group of L.I.

The Good Samaritan Prayer Group of Long Island holds their **meetings every Friday (except the first Friday of the month) at OLL School in Room 16 from 8 PM until 10 PM.**

All are welcome to experience singing, praying and fellowship each evening.

Merry Christmas New York City!

A concert for Christmas featuring Tony Melendez-born without arms in a small village in Nicaragua, he learned to play the guitar with his toes and is one of the best loved of all Catholic musicians. Also, OneVoice-an outstanding choir of talented singers from community and professional theatre. Fr. Charles and Laurie Mangano will bless their audience with inspiring songs that lead the soul to Christ, and Jon Kelley of the Prayer Channel will emcee. The concert will be on **Saturday, December 16 at 2 PM in the Alice Tully Hall, Lincoln Center**. For tickets call Center Charge at 212.721.6500, purchase online at www.LincolnCenter.org or from the Lincoln Center Box Office. Buses will be leaving from St. John Nepomucene in Bohemia and St. Patrick's in Bay Shore. For bus information, contact Sadie at 631.567.2676.



Our Lady of Lourdes Fifth Annual Family Christmas Pageant

*Friday, December 22
7 PM in the Church*

*What better way to prepare for Christmas
than to share the Christmas story with our children!*

We invite our entire parish family to come and share this special evening with us.

We'd like to involve many members of our parish community, especially all parish children!
It's easy...there are only two short practices and a dress rehearsal.

There's something for all ages:

Children

Pre-K through Grade 3

Angels and Shepherds

Grades 4 through 6

Three Kings and the Royal Servants; and Dancers

Grades 7 through 12

We need lots of help—musicians, singers, organizers and assistant directors!

If you can help with our pageant, please call Jennifer Gallagher at 661.3224 or email jengallagher@ollchurch.org.

Adults

We need help with costumes and supervision of the “angels and shepherds.” If you can help with any of these areas, please call Jennifer at 661.3224, or email JenGallagher@ollchurch.org.

Pageant Practices for All

Wednesday, December 13 from 7 PM until 8 PM in the Church

Thursday, December 21 Dress Rehearsal 7:30 PM in the Church

Daily Mass

8 AM

Weekend Masses

Saturday: 5 PM

Sunday: 8 AM, 9:30 AM,
11 AM, 12:30 PM and 6 PM

Reconciliation

Saturday: 4 PM - 4:45 PM



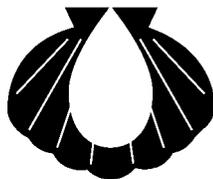
Rest In Peace

Lisa Ann Valentino

Muriel J. Walsh

Deborah Barbaro

Alex Azurowski



Baptisms

Michael Andrew French

Jeff and Christine

Daniel James Kossmann

James and Tammy

Caroline Lee Pickney

Christian and Amanda

Steven Michael Sanders-McKay

Theresa McKay

Rosary/Novena

Rosary:

Daily after 8 AM Mass

Miraculous Medal Novena:

Monday after 8 AM Mass

Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults(RCIA):

A process to be embraced by the Catholic Church. For non-Catholics and for Catholics who have never received formal religious education. If interested, please call the Parish Office.

Anointing of the Sick

Throughout the liturgical year. If needed sooner, please call the Parish Office.

Baptism

Please contact the Parish Office to schedule an appointment.

Marriage

Arranged at least six months in advance, please call the Parish Office.

Support Groups

Alcoholics Anonymous

Monday and Tuesday at
8 PM and Saturday at
7 PM in Lourdes Hall-
convent lower level.

ALANON

Each Wednesday at
10 AM in Lourdes Hall-
convent lower level.

Remembering...

Monday, December 11

St. Damasus I, pope

8:00 AM Michael Sanfilippo, Jr.

Tuesday, December 12

Our Lady of Guadalupe

8:00 AM Lawrence F. Kelly, Sr.
Raymond T. Kelly and Robert J. Kelly

Wednesday, December 13

St. Lucy, virgin

8:00 AM LaRocca & Sweeney Family

Thursday, December 14

St. John of the Cross, priest, bishop

8:00 AM Angelo & Felicia DeLeo

Friday, December 15

8:00 AM Vita J. Kelly

Saturday, December 16

8:00 AM Patricia McLaughlin, James Carrano, Mark Anthony Polito,
Muriel J. Walsh, In Honor of Sacred Heart, Theresa Eileen Henry,
Dolores Kachanski, Winifred Helfers, John Joseph Griffin,
Minnie Yacobellis, Bernard Junior Gordy, Peter Reehil

5:00 PM Barbara McGarrity

Sunday, December 17

8:00 AM Robert Wilson

9:30 AM Frank Petrone

11:00 AM Frances Scalia

12:30 PM Joseph Rizzo

6:00 PM People of the Parish, Maria Acquaviva, Alexander & Loreto Longo,
Squillanti Family, Rick Munkwitz, Anna Van Bramer,
Ginny Munkwitz, John Steffens, Frank Lima, Elizabeth Ganci,
Hedwig M. Yuliano, Mary Viggiano, Virginia Ortega,
Dominik Veraldi, Rose & Dominick Cocco, Mary Tortorella
Mamie & Michael Raia, Theresa & Frank Marsala

Social Action Alert

Interfaith Outreach

Congregation Beth Shalom

Babylon, NY

Join with our parish's Social Action Group and Liturgy Committees as we pray with the good and holy people of Congregation Beth Shalom in Babylon. We have been invited to join in the annual Chanukah candle lighting service at **5:30 PM on Saturday, December 16.**

One of the goals of our Jubilee Year was to increase our involvement in Interfaith and Ecumenical work. This is one clear step! If you are able to attend, please contact John Sureau at 661.3224, x. 135 or e-mail to jsureau@ollchurch.org. Let's continue to pray for people of all faiths!

Call for Peace

The United States Catholic Conference of Bishops issued a strong statement outlining our Church's view on the war in Iraq. We will publish excerpts here each week. Let's continue to pray for peace throughout our world and for the safe return of military service women and men.

"As bishops and as defenders of the human rights and religious freedom of all, we are alarmed by the deteriorating situation of Christians and other religious minorities in Iraq. Their vulnerability is dramatic evidence of the serious and growing dangers facing the entire nation of Iraq. Christians in particular are caught in the middle of civil strife between Sunnis and Shiites. Our prayerful support goes out to our brothers and sisters in the Christian community and to all those threatened by the deadly violence. We are deeply impressed by the courage of many Christians who remain in the land of their birth. Effective efforts are required to end all sectarian violence and to make Iraq secure for persons of all faith communities."

-Call for Dialogue and Action on Responsible Transition in Iraq

A statement of the President of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops

Living God's Call for Charity and Justice in Political Life

An excerpt from *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), the first Encyclical of Pope Benedict XVI

...to the Bishops, priests, and deacons, men and women, religious and all the lay faithful on Christian love.

Love is Our Mission as Church

The entire activity of the church is an expression of a love that seeks the integral good of man: it seeks evangelization through Word and Sacrament, an undertaking that is often heroic in the way it is acted out in history; and it seeks to promote man in the various arenas of life an human activity. Love is therefore the service that the Church carries out in order to attend constantly to man's sufferings and his needs, including material needs. And this is the aspect, this service of charity, on which I want to focus...Love of neighbor, grounded in the love of God, is first and foremost a responsibility for each individual member of the faithful, but it is also a responsibility for the entire ecclesial community at every level: from the local community to the particular Church and to the Church universal in its entirety. As a community, the Church must practice love. Love thus needs to be organized if it is to be an ordered service to the community.

Parish Outreach

Outreach Office Hours

Monday through Friday from 9:30 AM until 3:30 PM.
For information/assistance call 661.9262.

Our Lady of Lourdes Bereavement

Our parish support group for those who have lost a loved one—
If interested, please call the Parish Outreach Office at 661.9262.

Our pantry is running low on the following items...
cereal, coffee, soup, and tea.



canned fruit
canned vegetables
jelly
peanut butter
pudding/jello

Religion & Rock

Tune into “Religion & Rock” with Fr. Jim Vlaun on Sunday from 7 AM to 8 AM on WBAB 102.3 FM or 95.3 on the East End of Long Island.

Next Sunday’s theme is: **“Giving & Helping Others.”**

Don’t forget to tune in!

Visit “Religion & Rock” on the web, www.religionandrock.com.

Also watch “Good News with Father Jim” on TELECARE, channel 29, on Mondays and Fridays at 9:45 AM; Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays at 7:45 PM; Sundays at 8 PM.

Financial Summary

December 4, 2005

Weekly Collection	\$ 21,518.00
Weekly Budget	-\$ 21,000.00
+/- for the week	\$ 518.00

The estimated weekly collection needed to maintain and operate our parish buildings, ministries, programs and salaries is \$21,000.



Second Sunday of Advent

Luke 3:1-6

Not everyone is a fan of country music, but it is said that it is the one popular form of music in which the performer can express his or her love of God without fear of being politically incorrect. The group Rascal Flatts sings one such song, “Bless the Broken Road,” in which the main character acknowledges the many wrong turns his life had taken before he found his true love. But many also hear a profession of faith, of thankfulness for a once-bending road of life which is now straight.

The prophet Isaiah foretold of the coming of a man who would be “A voice of one crying out in the desert: ‘Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.’” Thus John, the son of Zechariah, fulfilled that prophecy as he traveled throughout the region of the Jordan announcing to all who would listen of a new baptism, one that would serve as a cleansing repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

As we celebrate the long liturgy of Advent, we remember that God prepared for the first coming of Christ over many centuries, revealing it through prophet after prophet until the last, John the Baptist (CCC 522-4). To the faithful throughout those many centuries, their patience was rewarded. The journeys that led them to believe in God’s Word serve us today as we wait patiently, making straight our paths of broken roads.

Readings for the Week of December 10, 2006

Sunday:	Bar 5:1-9/Phil 1:4-6, 8-11/Lk 3:1-6
Monday:	Is 35:1-10/Lk 5:17-26
Tuesday:	Zec 2:14-17 or Rv 11:19a; 12:1-6a, 10ab/Lk 1:26-38 or Lk 1:39-47
Wednesday:	Is 40:25-31/Mt 11:28-30
Thursday:	Is 41:13-20/Mt 11:11-15
Friday:	Is 48:17-19/Mt 11:16-19
Saturday:	Sir 48:1-4, 9-11/Mt 17:9a, 10-13
Next Sunday:	Zep 3:14-18a/Phil 4:4-7/Lk 3:10-18

Altar Society

Altar linens this week will be cared for by *Pat Wissing*.

If you would like to help care for our altar needs, please call the Parish Office at 661.3224.

Communion Calls

Communion brought to those who are homebound.

Contact the Parish Office at 661.3224.



Pastoral Care of the Sick

Please call the Parish Office at 661.3224 to leave the names of parishioners who:

- are homebound and would like to receive the Eucharist
- are in Good Samaritan Hospital and would like to be visited by a member of our Pastoral Care Ministry.

Pray for Our Sick

Please remember to keep in your thoughts and prayers ...

Sr. Margaret Bickar, Pat Bonavita, Thomas Brennan, Elise Brenner, Jo Brogan, Christian Bullock, David Calogero, Sr. Nancy Campkin, Dawn Coughlin, Regina Cranor, Joseph Cristallo, Joseph Fiore, Jason Fisher, Loretta Koskasko, Joseph Lehmann, Anthony Lombardo, Mike Lorento, Diego Marino, Michele McCann, Peter McCann, Sr., Donato Miranda, Bryan Monahan, Robert Petersen, Joe Radosti, Dan Rodriguez, Fred Ruggio, Rose Serragano, Dorothy Sullivan, Loretta Vitale

Members in the Military

We ask that you pray especially for those in our parish that are on active duty in the Middle East conflict.

They are:



Daniel D'Arienzo-US Army
Frederick Wm. Ellis-US Army
John Finn-US Army
Paul McEvoy-US Army
Michael Mallimo-US Army
Peter Provenzano-US Army
James Stultz- US Army

...and remember those of our parish family that are in the armed services, listed in our Parish Book of Intentions.

Advent: Creating a Space of Chastity

Fr. Ron Rolheiser, OMI

In one of her early books, Annie Dillard shares how she once learned a lesson, the hard way, about the importance of waiting. She had been watching a butterfly slowly emerge from its cocoon. The oh-so-slow process of transformation was fascinating, but, at a point, she grew impatient. She took a candle and heated the cocoon, though only slightly, in order to speed up things. It worked. The butterfly emerged a bit more quickly, but, because the process had been unnaturally rushed, it was born with wings that were not properly formed and it was not able to fly.

The lesson wasn't lost on Dillard. She understood immediately what was wrong, a certain chastity had been violated. She had short-circuited advent. How so?

One of the motifs we celebrate in advent is the idea that the messiah must be born of a virgin. Why? Is sexuality somehow dirty? Is it beneath Jesus to be conceived and born in the normal way? Sometimes those, false, understandings have been put forth. The real reason however for connecting advent and virginity is quite different. First, it underscores that Jesus, being the incarnate son of God, does not have a human father. Second, and key in terms of the spirituality of advent, is the idea that the messiah could only come forth from a virgin's womb because for something "divine" to be born a proper time of waiting, a proper chastity, must first take place. But why? What has chastity to do with Jesus' birth?

The answer lies in a proper understanding of chastity. What is it? Chastity is not, first of all, something specific to sex. It's about how we experience all of reality in general. To be chaste is to live in such a way so as to be fully and properly respectful of others, nature, and God. Chastity, properly defined, means living in such a way that our own needs, desires, agendas, and impatience do not get in the way of letting gift be gift, other be other, and God be God. Obviously this depends upon proper respect and proper waiting.

We can learn this by looking at its antithesis. We lack chastity when, for whatever reason (lack of respect, lack of reverence, impatience, selfishness, callousness, immaturity, undisciplined desire, lack of aesthetics) we relate to others, nature, or God in such a way that they cannot be fully who and what they are, according to their own unique rhythms and preciousness. We do this when we short-circuit patience and respect.

If this is true, then it is no accident that, so often, the prime analogate for lack of chastity is seen precisely as irresponsible sex. Sex, because it so deeply affects the soul, speaks most loudly about chastity or lack of it. Sex, like all other experience, is only chaste when it does not short-circuit full respect. But it often does so in a variety of ways. Prematurity, unfair pressure, subtle or crass force, taking without giving, posturing an intimacy that one isn't ready to enter, lack of respect for previous commitments, an unwillingness to include the whole person, disregard for the wider relationships of family and community, failure to respect long-range health and happiness, ignoring proper aesthetics, all of these make for a lack of proper respect within a sexual relationship. In essence, Annie Dillard's metaphor says it all: There's a fault in our chastity when we put a candle to the cocoon to unnaturally pressure the process.

And, as is obvious, the key element in all this is WAITING. Chastity is 90% about proper waiting. It's for this reason that one of the rich metaphors of advent is that of preparing a virgin's womb so that the divine can be born in a proper way. Advent calls us to patience, patience in carrying the frustration that we suffer when we have to wait for what we desire.

In Jewish apocalyptic literature there are a number of wonderful refrains that try to teach us this. They give us the idea that, before the Messiah can be conceived, gestated, and born, there must first be a proper time of waiting. In short-hand, these aphorisms express the theology and spirituality of advent: "People are always in a hurry; God is never in a hurry." "Every tear brings the messiah closer!" "It is with much groaning of the flesh that the life of the spirit is brought forth."

Carlo Carretto, one of the great spiritual writers of recent times, spent many years alone, a hermit in the Sahara desert. During these long, quiet years, he tried to hear what God was saying to us. In one of his books, written from this desert solitude, he suggests that perhaps the most important thing that God is trying to tell us today, especially in Western culture, is this: Be patient! Learn to wait - for everything: each other, love, happiness, God. The message of the great advent figures (Mary, John the Baptist, Isaiah) is the same.

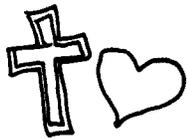
Used with permission of the author, Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser. Father Rolheiser is a theologian, teacher, and award-winning author and is currently the President of the Oblate School of Theology in San Antonio, TX. He can be contacted through his website www.ronrolheiser.com.

Sharing the Gospel

Have you ever played a game where you asked for a "do-over" so you could try again? When John told his neighbors to be baptized, he wanted them to have a second chance, A "do-over." He wanted to give them a fresh, clean start with God.



Mission for the Week



When you catch yourself being selfish, not following directions, or using hurtful words, stop. Say you're sorry, ask for forgiveness, and then try again.



Puzzle

Circle these words from today's Gospel:

BAPTIZED
FORGIVEN
ISAIAH

JOHN
DESERT
STRAIGHT

CROOKED
SMOOTH
ROUGH

C	I	F	O	R	G	I	V	E	N
R	O	U	G	H	L	O	Y	U	L
O	N	B	D	I	F	T	S	M	V
O	I	A	S	M	O	O	T	H	E
K	C	P	T	W	S	H	R	I	J
E	Y	T	O	U	M	Y	A	S	O
D	U	I	L	I	S	A	I	A	H
R	J	Z	O	C	E	T	G	K	N
O	Y	E	M	K	Y	I	H	I	W
H	A	D	E	S	E	R	T	O	U



Dear God,

when I find myself doing or saying things that you would not like, help me to stop and start over.

Amen