

## Holy Darkness

Darkness can terrify us, can consume us, as we know from our 2020 experience. And yet, the right kind of darkness can give us peace. A night of good sleep, for instance, or a “lovely soft day”—as the Irish call those shady, rainy, drizzling days that make Ireland green.

Once I had an experience of lovely, soft darkness. It took place in Hawaii—strangely, since light abounds there. A brother Jesuit and I decided to climb all the way up the side of one of Maui’s volcanic mountains—with a guide and with friends of his, I am happy to say—and then climb down into the crater itself. Fine, but no one had mentioned that there was a great dark cave at the other end of the crater floor. It was a “lava tube,” formed when a huge molten stream begins to cool and harden on the outside while the inside keeps flowing and emptying. This leaves a tube, into which we were ushered, following trustingly. We took a few curves, and suddenly there was not a scrap of natural light left for us, only a single electric bulb hanging from above. We settled down on various rocks. The guide put out the light.

He had warned us ahead of time, very kindly and all, but the words “put out the light” did not sound comforting to my ears. It is what Shakespeare’s Othello said as he blew out the candle and then again as he took the life of the sleeping Desdemona. Creepy.

Off it went.

Perhaps a dozen of us had made the trip, and we simultaneously stopped our movements and our nervous talk. Deep, unrelieved darkness settled around us and around everything else. Eyes open, eyes closed, it was all the same. No light, no shadow, no least spark. Obviously we felt trapped and afraid, lost in a strange place, our eyes suddenly useless.

No.

Against all reason, we felt great rest, great peace.

“I’ll turn the light back on now,” the guide whispered after several minutes, but we revolted.

“No, no, leave it off. Give us more time.” We sat, unseeing, consoled by the warmth and depth of absolute night.

When the tiny little bulb did finally go on again, our own eyesight surprised us. Seeing was like a memory that had slipped away. The dark had formed a resting place, it seemed, where our souls could re-charge, our eyes recover their innocence. Maybe the daylight world had become too ordinary, too usual, just something to reveal tools to be used. Now it seemed miraculous, a gift given by God, even if by means of an insignificant incandescent bulb.

In Sunday’s Gospel, the people hunger for light. “Are you the light?” they shout to John the Baptist. Will you “bring glad tidings to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to the captives and release the prisoners” (First Reading)?

“I am pointing you toward the light,” the Baptist seemed to say. “He will be here soon. Hold onto my arm.”

What is your experience of darkness? Maybe it is the opposite of quiet. Maybe terror is its name. If so, know that, however unrelieved your night may be, there is still, always, the promise of light. When you have been deprived for a long, long time, even one speck of light will change everything.

As a tiny child will on Christmas night.

John Foley, SJ

## Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

### St. Stephens Indian Mission

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Patti McMahan.....Director of Religious Education

### Blessed Sacrament & St. Josephs

332-9090

Sr. Teresa Frawley, OSF.....Past. Asst./Director of Religious Education

#### **Sacrament of Reconciliation & Sacrament of the Sick**

You may call the office to schedule an appointment for confession. If there is no answer please leave your name and phone number and Father Jim will return your call. Please do not schedule an appointment if you are sick, please wait until you are well to protect yourself and the priest. Priest and penitent will be required to wear a mask and maintain a safe six foot distance during confession.

The Sacrament of the sick is available for those who are in need, terminal and to those who have an upcoming surgery. Please call the office if you or a loved one is in need of this sacrament.

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Come in seeking; come in wondering; come in hurting. Come into this house of companionship and compassion. Come in. You are welcome here. Our faith Family opens its doors to you and in the name of Christ, bids you Welcome!  
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*The purpose of St. Stephen’s Indian Mission, the presence of the Roman Catholic Church among the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho, is to grow into a strong community of believers, sharing our lives in the Holy Spirit, forming one welcoming People of God, who are committed to Jesus Christ, His gospel and mission.*

## Readings December 14th through December 20th :

Mon: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a; Ps 25:4-5ab, 6, 7bc, 8-9; Mt 21:23-27  
Tue: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13; Ps 34:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23; Mt 21:28-32  
Wed: Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21c-25; Ps 85:9ab, 10-14; Lk 7:18b-23  
Thur: Gn 49:2, 8-10; Ps 72:3-4, 7-8, 17; Mt 1:1-17  
Fri: Jer 23:5-8; Ps 72:1-2, 12-13, 18-19; Mt 1:18-25  
Sat: Jgs 13:2-7, 24-25a; Ps 71:3-4a, 5-6b, 16-17; Lk 1:5-25  
Sun: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12. 14a, 16; Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29; Rom 16:25-27; Lk 1:26-38

### Parish Collection

Last week mail in collection \$2770

*"Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." Corinthians 9:7*

THANK YOU to all who have continued to make financial contributions to St. Stephens Indian Mission through these most trying times! God Bless!

### Mass Intentions this week

12/13: Sunday	+Edward LaMorte
Sunday	For the people
12/16: 5pm Wednesday	+Linda Murdock
12/17: 7:15am Thursday	+Ruth Althea Bythewood
12/20: Sunday	Russ Millar
Sunday	For The People

As we continue to celebrate Sunday Mass at St. Stephens, we are limited to 10 people in attendance as we follow the Wind River Intertribal Council's resolution. If you would like to be added to the rotating list of parishioners for Mass please call the office or email the parish office. Please also email the parish office ([melissa.brown@saintstephensmission.com](mailto:melissa.brown@saintstephensmission.com)) to make sure your contact information is on file with the Parish as this is our primary way to contact you when things change or if we have an event you might be interested in. Thank you!

Please remember that Bishop Steven's general dispensation from the Sunday Mass obligation will remain in effect for the duration of Mass attendance restrictions. Mass is available for viewing on K2 Television at 9am and/or you may watch via livestream on St. Margaret's or Holy Rosary's FB pages.

Face masks are required at Mass. Please use hand sanitizer, refrain from exchanging handshakes during the Sign of Peace and maintain at least six feet apart from parishioners (except if you are in the same household) including processing to receive the Eucharist. If you are not feeling well and are scheduled to attend Mass please stay home and call the office so we can switch you with another parishioner until you feel well. Please keep our church family safe. We appreciate your cooperation as we move forward, safely, together.

Please pray for the family of the deceased:

+Gary C'Hair

*Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.*

Having Mass offered for an anniversary, marriage, special occasion, or in memory of someone is a special gift. Cards are available at the office.

Diocesan guideline is \$10.00 for Mass.

Today is the Third Sunday of Advent! There are many guides online for prayer during the Advent season. Find one that is good for your family!

Nominations for Parish Council are being accepted! You may either call Fr. Jim or mail us your nomination or nominate yourself! Please prayerfully consider serving in this capacity.

*So our parishioners may plan as they need: There will NOT be a communal penance service this Advent. You may call the office and leave a message if you would like to schedule an appointment for confession.*



### Poinsettias

If you would like to donate poinsettias for the church please bring them to the parish office or leave in the church by December 22nd. Thank you and God Bless!

Praised be Jesus Christ!

Praise Him now and always!