

Spaciousness

During Advent we have been celebrating our emptiness.

I suppose this sounds odd, and yet give it a thought. If we were completely filled up we would have no room to let anyone or anything in. We would be like a clump of mud or a great thick mountain. Nice to look at, maybe, but not so good at letting anything else get in.

Somewhere in scripture the people ask God to take their hearts of stone and make them into hearts of flesh. Throughout Advent we have been asking especially for that. For time to become aware of God and then thank God for the spacious emptiness that a human heart has within it. Living hearts, not stone ones.

But increasing our heart's openness can be frightening. The dark spreads out its kingdom every day here in the Northern hemisphere, even as Christmas comes near. We see less by natural light. And our body systems squirm to readjust.

True confession time: I used to be resentful as the daylight hours became shorter and shorter—and especially when “daylight savings time” collapsed and the dark settled in an hour sooner in the afternoon. It was dark well before I left the office. Depressing.

Such small creatures within so vast a night.

Finally, a few years ago, I saw some wisdom in deprivation and darkness. Increased dark allows human beings to hunker down inside their shelter—cozy and patient, waiting for the light to return, savoring the dark. This helps them reflect upon themselves.

God says as much to Bethlehem in the First Reading. It is as if he says,

You are so tiny! You are not even counted among the clans of Judah. You are empty of big ideas, power, royalty and influence. How can you be sufficient to bring forth a ruler of Jerusalem?

Light had already come from within that darkness, of course, sufficiency from insufficiency. King David had been born in Bethlehem, centuries before (see I Samuel: 17:12). And of course, Jesus was to be born in the same town. This strange, wide place in the road produced Kings?

Yes.

It is the same way with our souls. Our dimness and our emptiness are where Jesus is to be born on Christmas. Such darkness includes whatever in us that is gloomy, angry, jealous, or just discouraged. The friends who leave us behind, who have a high, family time while we feel so alone: this is where the child will be born.

Watch Mary hasten to her cousin's house, a long trip, on foot, over dirt and sand and rocks, under the hot, hot sun (Gospel). She does not need to be coddled and queenly in order to bring forth the Holy One. She does not spend a second worrying whether the way is too hard. Her soul somehow knows about the soft light that will shine from within her. Everything else is in second place.

Maybe emptiness can speak humbly from within you and me too.

For a minute or two we might quit trying so hard to make everything alright. Let go and let God. That way we will get to know the one whose “origins are old” (First Reading).

We might even let that One take up its home within us. It can make itself whatever size is needed for our souls.

What better Christmas could there be?

John Foley, SJ

Fourth Sunday of Advent December 19, 2021

St. Stephens Indian Mission

www.saintstephensmission.com

856-7806

33 St. Stephens Road

PO Box 250

St. Stephens, WY 82524

Fr. Jim Heiser.....Pastor

Fr. Drew Duncan.....Associate Pastor

Sr. Monica Suhayda, CSJ.....Past. Asst./ Gift Shop 856-4330

Patti McMahon.....Director of Religious Education

Blessed Sacrament & St. Josephs

332-9090

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

St. Stephens

Friday: Adoration followed by Benediction 3:45pm

Saturday: Sacrament of Reconciliation 2:00 PM to 2:30 PM

Sunday Masses: 9:00 AM and 5:00 PM

Tuesday & Thursday: Mass at 7:15am

Wednesday & Friday: Mass at 5:00pm

1st Saturday: Adoration at 8:00am; Mass at 9:00am

St. Josephs, Ethete

11am Sunday Mass

Sacrament of Reconciliation 15 minutes before Mass

Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Washakie

Saturday Vigil Mass 4:30 PM

Sacrament of Reconciliation 15 minutes before Mass

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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 20th through December 26th:

Mon: Is 7:10-14; Ps 24:1-4b, 5-6; Lk 1:26-38
 Tue: Sg 2:8-14; Ps 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21; Lk 1:39-45
 Wed: 1 Sm 1:24-28; (Ps) 1 Sm 2:1, 4-8d; Lk 1:46-56
 Thur: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Ps 25:4-5b, 8-10, 14; Lk 1:57-66
 Fri: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Ps 89:2-5, 27, 29; Lk 1:67-79
 Sat: Is 52:7-10; Ps 98:1-6; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18
 Sun: Sir 3:2-6, 12-14; Ps 128:1-5; Col 3:12-21; Lk 2:41-52

Sunday Ministry Schedule-St. Stephens

12/19/21

9:00am Mass

Lector: Tom Kasper

5:00pm Mass

Lector: Volunteer Needed

12/26/21

9:00am Mass

Lector: Jim Cunningham

5:00pm Mass

Lector: Volunteer Needed

Parish Collection

12/12

TBD

"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

Praised be Jesus Christ! Praise Him now and always!

Mass Intentions this week

12/18: Saturday 4:30pm Blessed Sacrament Jim Wilson
 12/19: Sunday 9am St. Stephens +Richard Shelton
 Sunday 11am St. Josephs Special Intention
 Sunday 5pm St. Stephens +Zoe Friday
 12/21: Tuesday 7:15am St. Stephens Special Intention
 12/22: Wednesday 5pm St. Stephens Munguia Family
 12/23: Thursday 7:15am St. Stephens Special Intention

Christmas Mass Schedule

12/24: Friday 4:30pm Blessed Sacrament Special Intention
 Friday 6pm St. Josephs Strong Buffalo Martel
 Midnight St. Stephens Howard Brown
 12/25: Saturday 9am St. Stephens Geraldine Brown
 Saturday 11am St. Josephs Patricia Lieuellen
 12/26: Sunday 9am St. Stephens Ron Mamot
 Sunday 11am St. Josephs Joan Willow
 Sunday 5pm St. Stephens All our holy families

Please pray for the families of the deceased:

+Hubert Warren, Jr.

+Cordell Washington

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

Decorating for Christmas

If you would like to help clean and decorate the church for Christmas please come on Tuesday or Wednesday. Howard & Karen Brown and family usually take the lead in getting this done for our parish but will be unable to this Christmas so please come this week and lend a hand. Many hands make light work, please join us!

Poinsettias

If you would like to donate poinsettias for the altar in memory of a loved one please bring to the church by Wednesday. Thank you!



Blessed Sacrament and St. Josephs

Contact Sister Teresa for baptism classes. God bless!