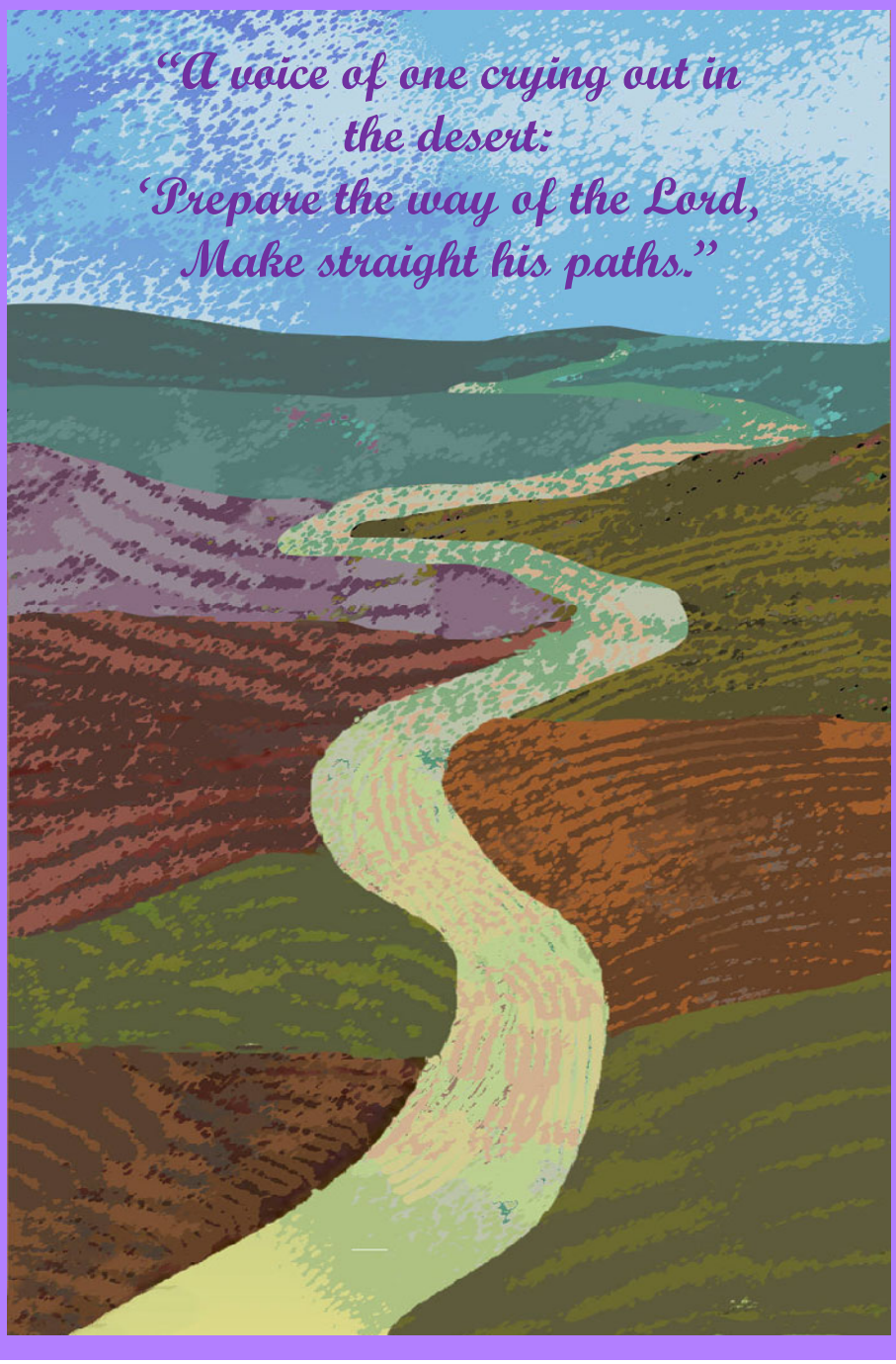
Our Lady of Grace Catholic Parish

595 East Main Street • Avon Park, Florida 33825

First Sunday of Advent **November 29,2009**



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Phone: (863) 453-4757
Fax: (863) 453-2620
Monday through Friday
9 AM to 2:30 PM

Pastor
Fr. Nicholas McLoughlin

Spanish
Apostolate
Fr. José Gonzalez

Deacon
Fred Simon

Assisting Clergy
Fr. Gerald Grogan
Pastor Emeritus
Fr. Robert Onze
Fr. Leo Frechette
Fr. Jack Belfield

Administrative Assistant
Betty Heiring

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Dear parishioners: Advent is the time when Christians prepare to greet Christ—who came as a babe in a manger, who comes into our lives each day, and who will come again at the end of time. Advent is the time when the people of faith are most at odds with the culture, as the church calls people to focus on getting ready to receive Christ—preparing hearts and lives to make room for Jesus, to live as he would have us live. It is a time of longing, not fulfillment. Quiet reflection, not celebration. But the culture is in full pursuit of festivity, unable or unwilling to wait and contemplate and prepare for the real festival. It is not easy to observe Advent without being pulled prematurely into Christmas. Next Sunday, December 6, we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas. He is an Advent Saint.

The Practice of Gift-Giving: How does St. Nicholas fit into the season of Advent? The practice of gift giving, which has come to be associated with Christmas, has been associated with St. Nicholas. How did this happen? One story tells of a poor man with three daughters. In those days a young woman's father had to offer the future husband a dowry. The poor man was unable to afford dowries for his three daughters. There was a danger that they would be sold into a life of prostitution. St. Nicholas heard about their predicament and came to their rescue. Mysteriously, on three separate occasions, a bag of gold appeared in their home providing the needed dowries. The bags of gold were tossed through an open window by St. Nicholas and reputedly landed in the stockings or shoes left before the fire to dry. This led to the custom of children hanging stockings or putting out shoes, eagerly awaiting gifts from St. Nicholas. Sometimes the story is told with gold balls instead of bags of gold. That is why three gold balls, sometimes represented as oranges, are one of the symbols for St. Nicholas. And so St. Nicholas is a gift-giver.

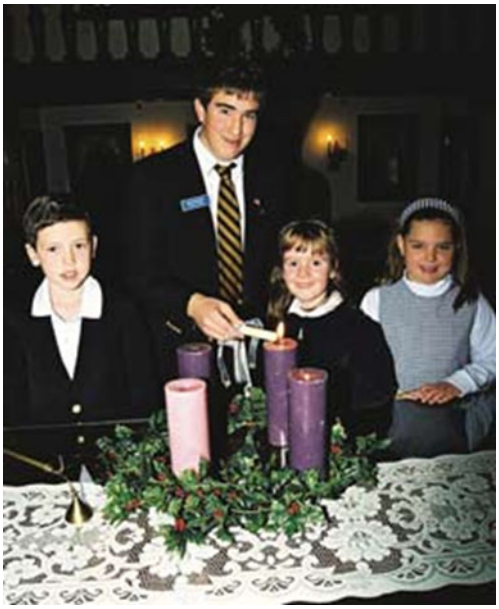
Patron Saint of Sailors and Voyagers: Several stories tell of Nicholas and the sea. When he was young, Nicholas sought the holy by making a pilgrimage to the Holy Land. There as he walked where Jesus walked, he sought to more deeply experience Jesus' life, passion, and resurrection. Returning by sea, a mighty storm threatened to wreck the ship. Nicholas calmly prayed. The terrified sailors were amazed when the wind and waves suddenly calmed, sparing them all. And so St. Nicholas is the patron of sailors and voyagers. If you cruise around the Greek islands, which is a very nice way to spend a summer vacation, you will notice that all the cruise lines have an icon of St. Nicholas as the patron saint of sailors and travelers.

Patron Saint of Children: Other stories tell of Nicholas saving his people from famine, sparing lives of those innocently accused, and much more. He did many kind and generous deeds in secret, expecting nothing in return. Within a century of his death, he was celebrated as a saint. Today he is venerated in the East as wonder, or miracle worker and in the West as patron of a great variety of people: mariners, children, pawn-brokers, bankers, scholars, orphans, travelers, prisoners, marriage match-makers, victims of judicial mistakes, and so many others.

Keep Christ in Christmas: It is very appropriate that we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas during the season of Advent. We need to "keep Christ in Christmas" by looking at and observing the true practice of gift-giving. It is not self-centered: it is other centered. That is why we encourage parish children and parishioners to bring wrapped gifts to Church, which will be distributed to poor children here in Avon Park who might not otherwise receive a gift for Christmas. You should wrap the gift; indicate whether it is for a boy or girl; indicate age for whom it is appropriate. You can also give vouchers. **FR. Nick.**

ADVENT WREATH

"Customarily the Advent Wreath is constructed of a circle of evergreen branches into which are inserted four candles. According to tradition, three of the candles are violet and the fourth is rose. However, four violet or white candles may also be used" (Book of Blessings 1510).



The rose candle is lit the third Sunday of Advent, for this color anticipates and symbolizes the Christmas joy announced in the first word of the Entrance Antiphon: "Rejoice" (Latin, Gaudete). For this reason the Third Sunday is also called Gaudete Sunday, and rose color vestments are permitted.

The Advent Wreath represents the long time when people lived in spiritual darkness, waiting for the coming of the Messiah, the Light of the world. Each year in Advent people wait once again in darkness for the coming of the Lord, His *historical coming* in the mystery of Bethlehem, His *final coming* at the end of time, and His *special coming* in every moment of grace.

During Advent, family and friends can gather around the Advent Wreath lighting the appropriate candle(s), read from the daily Advent meditation and sing songs. The Church's official Book of Blessings also provides a blessing ceremony for the advent wreath.

BLESSING OF AN ADVENT WREATH

Leader: In the short days and long nights of Advent, we realize how we are always waiting for deliverance, always needing salvation by our God. Around this wreath, we shall remember God's promise.

Then the Scripture is read:
Reader: Listen to the words of the prophet Isaiah: The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light;
Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing.
(Isaiah 9:1-2).

Reader: The Word of the Lord.
Response: Thanks be to God.

Leader: Let us now pray for God's blessings upon us and upon this wreath.
Leader: Lord our God,
we praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: he is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, he is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, he is the Savior of every nation.
Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we light the candles of this wreath.
May the wreath and its light
be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation.
May he come quickly and not delay.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.

New Members for Open Parish Council Seats

The recent deaths of parishioners Jack Heiring and Jo Brenner created two vacant seats on the Our Lady of Grace Parish Council. We invite registered parish members wishing to serve our community to apply to fill those seats, which will require a vote by the remaining members of the council. Please contact the parish office in the Grogan Center and complete a nomination application and return it by Dec. 4. Candidates must be 16 years or older and have registered with the parish for at least a year. Any parent, child or person living with a current council member is not eligible. We particularly encourage our Hispanic and young (under 30) parishioners to apply. For more information, contact Kevin Bouffard in the evenings at 452-1515 or anytime at kevinbouffard@yahoo.com.

K of C Breakfast

Ladies and gents, have you spent enough time in the kitchen over Thanksgiving. Let the Knights help you. We will cook our now famous country breakfast on Sunday, November 29, 8 a.m. until 12 Noon. Bring your family, friends, and guests and let us do the work. It's still only $5 for adults and children under 12 eat free. A blessed Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving Food Collection

The Sunday school children sponsored a Thanksgiving Service Project to bring 2 cans of non-perishable food to Church per family to help families in Avon Park who were having a difficult time because of the downturn in the economy. The children invited parishioners to join them in this project. They thank you the parishioners for your overwhelming response to their appeal.

Notes from the Ministry of Music.

The choir has begun preparing a new Mass, named *The Heritage Mass,* because it contains elements of both the old and the new. Therefore it will start including the "Lord have Mercy "as a part of the new music. The ancient invocation " Kyrie Eleison" or "Lord have Mercy" is a chant by which the faithful acclaims The Lord and implores his mercy. It is usually sung in dialogue by the entire liturgical assembly with the cantor, choir, and congregation alternating. This will begin on the 1st Sunday of Advent, the 1st Sunday of the new liturgical year, with a pre-Mass warm-up.

Census 2010 to create jobs in Highlands County

The U.S. Census Bureau is going on a hiring spree in advance of the 2010 Census, that is, temporary jobs from 5 to 7 weeks. There will be at least 2,000 temporary jobs available. For info, call Don Hanna, Highlands County Planning, (863)402-6650.

Avon Park Christmas parade

The Ladies Guild is sponsoring a float in Avon Park Christmas parade which will be on Monday, November 30, at 7:00 p.m. Come out and support the Ladies Guild and enjoy yourselves.

Ladies Guild Christmas Party

The Ladies Guild will host its Christmas Luncheon on Wednesday, December 9, at 12 noon in the Grogan Center. All ladies of the Parish are invited but must R.S.V.P. to Jere Miller at 453-6743. Bring a gift for nursing home patients – man or woman.

K of C Fourth Degree

The Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree is proud to announce that it has been formally declared as Our Lady Queen of the Universe Assembly 3203. Its first business meeting is on Tuesday, December 1, at 7 p.m. in the St. John Bosco Youth Center.

Scott Olson, Getty Images

U.S. Bishops Renew Resolve on Health Care Reform

BALTIMORE, Maryland, NOV. 16, 2009 (Zenit.org).- As the U.S. bishops closed the first session of their fall general assembly today, the president introduced an item not on the agenda, but "critical:" the country's health care reform.

Cardinal Francis George of Chicago, president of the U.S. bishops' conference, underlined the health care debate as "one of the most critical issues" of the country and the conference. He read a statement and asked for the approval of the conference in order to release it on behalf of all. The statement, dated Nov. 17, thanked those congress members who voted against including the federal funding of abortion in the health care reform plan of the House of Representatives. Cardinal George clarified that the conference is not approving specific means to be employed in the proposed health care policy, but rather is emphasizing principles such as universal access and the right to life of every human person. He underlined the conference's commitment to work now to persuade the senate to follow similar principles, to also exclude abortion funding from their reform proposal. Health care is "about human beings," the prelate said, and hence it has "serious moral consequences.

"Principles, not politics

In a press conference after the session, Bishop William Murphy of Rockville Centre, New York, chairman of the bishops' Domestic Justice Committee, affirmed the conference's desire to emphasize "principles, not politics." The prelate, who has been overseeing the conference's health care efforts, said of the House of Representative's decision, "We have a sense of a job well done by staff who have made a principled stand." The bishops do not do politics, he said, but "we're in a world of politics," so we had to deal with those who have the responsibility to make the laws. The bishop underlined the conference's desire to look for a "principled position" that will continue a law to prevent the use of taxpayer money for abortion. "Killing a child in the womb is not health care," he stated. There were members of congress who agreed with the Church on these ideals, he noted, and "we were able to work with them."

Bishop Murphy underlined the conference's continued commitment to this effort: "We are pleased to have come this far, but we know that we have a road ahead of us." It is a "different situation in the senate," he noted, underlining the need to see who is "committed to the same ideals that we are." The prelate stated that U.S. President Barack Obama "made it clear" that he was committed to remain "abortion neutral."

Sacramental Life Of the Parish

Baptisms:
Baptismal orientation is the first Sunday of each month. Ceremonies are performed on the second Sunday.

Marriages
Adequate preparation is required. Call the parish office six months in advance.

Ministry to the Sick:
Arrangements can be made to have a priest and/or a Eucharistic minister visit on a regular basis, if necessary. Call the parish office.

Registration
Permanent and seasonal members are encouraged to register. Registration cards are available at the main church entrance.

Schedule of Masses And Prayers

Saturday
8 AM with Confession
At 8:30 AM (Nov.-May)
Vigil 4 PM
7 Pm Spanish
Sunday
8 AM and 10:30 AM
(Life Teen Mass)
Holy Days
Vigil 5:30 PM
8 AM
Daily Mass
Monday-Friday 8 AM
First Friday
Mass and Holy Hour
8 AM
First Saturday
Mass at 8 AM
Confessions
Saturday 3:30 PM

MASS INTENTIONS

SATURDAY	**NOVEMBER 28**
4:00 pm	Kenneth Hebert by Jean Branham.
	Special Intention for Robert & Mary Chudzinski (62nd wedding anniversary).
	Anna Gildea by Bill & Mary Crennan.
7:00 pm	Mass in Spanish
SUNDAY	**NOVEMBER 29**
8:00 am	Jack Heiring by Jim & Marilyn Conroy.
	Jo Brenner by the Heartland Idol Board.
	Geoffrey Pereira by Mom & Dad
10:30 am	Catherine Bouffard by Fred & Judy Nugent.
	Concetta & Barto Leggiero by Daughter Madeline Brown.
	John Boudreau by Monica Boudreau..
6:00 pm	Nichole Sevigny by Sevigny Family.
MONDAY	**NOVEMBER 30**
8:00 am	Edward Buzzell by Wife.
TUESDAY	**DECEMBER 1**
8:00 am	Mary Jean Myers by Husband.
	Souls in Purgatory, especially ones mentioned by name.
WEDNESDAY	**DECEMBER 2**
	Marie Carducci by Rocky Carducci
THURSDAY	**DECEMBER 3**
8:00 am	For our Parish Family.
FRIDAY	**DECEMBER 4**
8:00 am	Timothy Roche by Parents.
	Marge Neis by Peg
SATURDAY	**DECEMBER 5**
4:00 pm	Joffrey Nassour by Helene Nassour.
	Nevardo Paniagua by Family.
	Nora & John Smith & Kathryn Reisert by George & Kathy.
SUNDAY	**DECEMBER 6**
8:00 am	Marie Carducci by Rocky Carducci.
	Geoffrey Pereira by Mom & Dad.
	Tom Blank by Edward & Mary Brosi.
10:30 am	Ronald Keppler by Wife & Daughter.
	Elmer & Anna Fischer by Jerry & Carol Brummel.
	Maurice Schwab by Eileen Schwab
6:00 pm	

FOR THE SICK OF THE PARISH

Rainald Gervais,Jr. Ed Kozma
Cindy Maxon Rudy Cecere
Jack Revells Noreen Buckey
Chris Comito Louis Boucher
Elaine Summarin Ana Rivera
Mary Altman John Topa
Lydia DeLagarde Cindy Maxon
Patti Wedge Arline Douville
Pat McCann Lindsey Murphy Richard Wolf
Marlene Glabb Bill Gast Katy Heirholzer

For the sick of the parish & for those who care for the sick, and our loved ones.

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF NOVEMBER 29

Sunday: Jer 33:14-16 1Thes 3:4-12 Lk 21:25-28,34-36
Monday: Rm. 10:9-18 Mt 4: 18-22
Tuesday: Is 11:1-10 Lk 10:21-24
Wednesday: Is 25:6-10a Mt 15:29-37
Thursday: Mt 7: 21,24-27 Mk 16: 15-20
Friday: Is 29:17-24 Mt 9:27-1
Saturday: Is 30: 19-21,23-26 Mt 9:35-10:1,5a,6-8
Sunday: Bar 5: 1-9 Phil 1:4-6,8-11 Lk 3: 1-6

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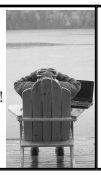

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"And then they will see the Son of Man Coming in a cloud with power and great glory. But when these signs begin to happen, stand erect And raise your heads because your redemption Is at hand" (Luke 21: 27-28)