

Sunday and Feast Day Liturgical Notes for Priests and Deacons

Suggestions for Leading Worship



Office of Worship
P.O. Box 2028
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-2028
Phone: 225-242-0120
Fax: 225-336-8731
E-Mail: tranzino@diobr.org

RE: Liturgical Suggestions for the Fourth Sunday of Advent – Cycle B

Sunday or Feast Day date: December 20-21, 2008

Dear Fathers and Deacons,

An Overview...

One catches a sense that the tone within the season of Advent is shifting by noticing the propers. The invitation before the Opening Prayer says that Advent is drawing to a close; the Prayer over the Gifts says that Christmas is drawing closer. Thus, those who created the design of the liturgical calendar give the Fourth Sunday of Advent an incarnational focus. Mary is a key figure in the liturgy in all three *Lectionary* cycles. In Cycle B, the most explicit text of Mary's role in the incarnation is expressed.

While there are numerous annunciation stories in the scriptures, the Gospel account has a different stance. This is not a recounting of historical issues. There is a theology being presented with the importance of the role of Mary and the long-desired Messiah. The coming Messiah is not the product of human activity but Divine intervention by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the one to be born will be called Son of the Most High. St. Paul's Letter to the Romans keeps this story firmly rooted on the ground with its emphasis that the Savior would be born with a human lineage – one of us.

Mary's response gives voice to the cause of discipleship for all who believe: I am the servant of the Lord...

Faith Sharing Questions...

1. What do you notice has changed about the Advent Liturgy on the Fourth Sunday?
2. How does Mary's generosity to respond to God's invitation strike you? What is one insight for your own life that you have from the Gospel story?
3. Advent continues to invite us to not forget the reason for Jesus' coming: to suffer, to die, to rise. This is called the Paschal Mystery. Why do you think there is such little emphasis outside of Church on this aspect of Jesus' coming?

Some Other Considerations as You Prepare...

1. If you choose to use Form C of the Penitential Rite, an example could be: "Lord Jesus, you came to gather the nations into the peace of God's kingdom, Lord have mercy; Christ Jesus, you come in Word and Sacrament to strengthen us in holiness, Christ have mercy; Lord Jesus, you are Son of God and Son of Mary, Lord have mercy".
2. The First Option of the Opening Prayer is more oriented to the incarnation-redemption focus; the Alternative Opening Prayer is more specific about Mary's role in service to God's plan.
3. The Preface mandated to be used after December 17 is Advent II. This Preface, which is used only from December 17 to 24, shifts focus from the Lord who will come in glory to the Lord who comes at Bethlehem.
4. Prayers Over the People nos. 4, 10, 13, 16 or 23 are recommended – or use the Solemn Blessing for Advent.

Looking Ahead...

1. The Advent weekdays continue to use the O Antiphons to frame the *Magnificat* at Evening Prayer. These antiphons can be used within the weekday liturgy as the verse for the Gospel acclamation.
2. Don't make Christmas come too early. This is still Advent.
3. The Christmas season will continue almost immediately after Christmas Day with the Holy Family weekend. Make sure your practical details are ready, e.g., clean linens.
4. Be sure to announce the liturgy schedule for New Year's.
5. A Blessing for Families can be found in the *Book of Blessings*, ch. 1, p. 42ff. If used, this could conclude the Intercessory Prayers on the Feast of the Holy Family or, the prayer of blessing may be used at the end of Mass after the invitation to "Bow your heads and pray for God's blessing".

SAMPLE INTERCESSIONS FOR THE 4TH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Priest: The Lord comes to save us and to establish his kingdom. Let us give voice in our prayer to the longings of the human race, particularly the poor and the forgotten:

Deacon (or other reader if there is no deacon):

1. For the Church to evangelize in the spirit of the Blessed Mother; that the preaching task may be fulfilled in every nation on earth, we pray to the Lord...
2. That God's peace may come and the violence of this world pass away, we pray to the Lord...
3. That our parish be expectant in hope for the revelation of the Lord Jesus in our lives and for our community, we pray to the Lord...
4. For our inquirers into the faith; for our catechumens and candidates, that God will grace them with the fullness of faith, we pray to the Lord...
5. For those who have died in the peace of Christ and for the dead whose faith is known to God alone, we pray to the Lord...
6. In peace and in silence, we offer our needs to the Father...

[pause; the presider alone concludes]

Priest: O God of every nation,
Listen and give answer to our prayers made this Advent day.
Grace us with your consolation and your peace,
through Christ our Lord.
Amen.