



Society of African Missions

“The Mission”

23 Bliss Avenue
 Tenafly, NJ 07670
 Phone: 201-567-0450
 Visit our website
www.smafathers.org



Mass Schedule

Sundays

10:00 am; 12 noon

Weekdays & Holy Days

9:30 am & 11:45 am

Christmas & New Year’s Day

10:00 am; 12 noon

Confessions Saturdays:

After 11:45am Mass.

Or by appointment.

Contact Fr. James McConnell

201-567-0450 Ext. 242

Bereavement & Visit to the Sick

Contact Fr. James McConnell

201-567-0450 Ext. 242

Perpetual Mass Association

Office open Monday-Friday
 from 9:30am to 3:00pm

S.M.A. Vocation Office

Fr Dermot Roache, SMA

Director

201-256-0450 Ext. 253

S.M.A. Museum

Open Monday-Sunday from
 9:00am –5:00pm

Sunday Collection: \$1125

Thank you for your support.
 Please remember to support
 your local parishes.

Administration:

Fr Ranees A. Rayappan,
 Provincial Superior

Fr James McConnell,
 House Superior

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Masses for the week of **DECEMBER 17, 2023 – DECEMBER 23, 2023**

Date	Time	Intention	Requested by:
Sun.-Sat.	8:00	Liv. & Dec. Benefactors of the SMA	
Sun. Dec. 17	10:00	Carmela Coppolino+	Angela and Roger Gussoni
	12:00	Annie Hamill+	Daughter
Mon. Dec. 18	9:30	Holy Souls in Purgatory	Louise Coull
	11:45	Theresa Tietjen+	John Tietjen
Tue. Dec. 19	9:30	Michael R. Desrochers+	
	11:45	Nam Yae Cho Marianna+	Anna Lee
Wed. Dec. 20	9:30	Margaret Salvani+	Josie Martinez
	11:45	Jack Kenny+	Mae Kenny & Family
Thurs. Dec. 21	9:30	Catherine M. Hamill+	Friend
	11:45	Holy Souls	Victoria Costa
Fri. Dec. 22	9:30	Sr. Gerard Cooney+	Martha Paladino
	11:45	Carmela & Giuseppi Salituro+	Enrico & Filomena Salituro
Sat. Dec. 23	9:30	Mary C. Tierney+	Kathy Tierney
	11:45	James LaGreca+	Paul LaGreca

Today’s Readings: *First Reading* Isaiah 61:1-2. 10-11 *This radiant song of praise reminds us that our experience of human love is a foretaste of the joy promised to those who open their hearts to God.*
Second Reading 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 *We are reminded that we can trust God to be alive and active in our world and in our lives, come what may.*

Gospel John 1:6-8. 19-28 *The story of John the Baptist reminds us that we also are called to give witness to Jesus and prepare a way for him wherever we are.*

SCHEDULE OF MASSES FOR CHRISTMAS

December 24th Christmas Eve: 10am and 12 Noon 8:00pm

December 25th Christmas Day: 10am and 12 Noon

December 26th Masses as usual 9:30 and 11:45am

“For as the earth sends up its shoots and a garden makes seeds sprout, so the Lord makes saving justice and praise spring up in the sight of all nations.”

Illustration

In winter it is difficult to believe that our gardens and fields will ever again enjoy the flowering and fruition of what has been sown in them. The ground is like stone; the earth looks dry and unyielding; and it seems as if everything has died. But keen gardeners and farmers know how to be patient and to stay hopeful that all their hard work will be rewarded come spring and summer. No true gardener or farmer spends wintertime digging down into the soil to see what is going on there. That would be the surest way to ruin a harvest. It's a question of holding on in faith and confidence in the God of life.

The prophet Isaiah uses agricultural images for an audience that lived off its own produce. Most of us nowadays live removed from such direct contact with the earth, but we know how heavily we depend on crops growing well to feed ourselves, and what a threat to the earth's future it poses when the good health of our natural environment is ignored. Environmentalists have taught us to be alert to the signs of the times. Like John the Baptist, they are the prophets of our era, who warn us to keep awake and to prepare for the coming of God in all the calls of our day to conversion and right living.

Gospel Teaching

Today's Gospel reading has clear links with the two readings that precede it. The setting is the prophetic ministry of John the Baptist as the announcer of the Messiah. John makes clear to the religious authorities that his is a preparatory role. Like a gardener or farmer, he makes the ground ready for the seed of faith to be sown to grow well and unhindered. John sees himself as the preparer of the soil where Jesus will sow the seed of God's word and make it become flesh through his own life and ministry. In the verses that follow, we see the impact of this and the way that faith and commitment are spread. John has already prepared Philip and Andrew, who meet Jesus and are captivated by him. Immediately they call their brother and friend respectively, so Peter and Nathanael become disciples. They will in turn go out to spread God's word and minister through healing. Faith and commitment can be contagious.

Advent is a time for thinking about our own preparedness to receive God's word and God's call in our hearts. In what way does the soil of our heart need preparing, the paths of our life need making straight? It's also a time for reflecting on how we prepare the ground for the faith of those around us to grow and flourish.

Application

Many of today's Christians worry about the loss of faith within their families and within society. The statistics in the northern hemisphere are not encouraging – the faith and practice of previous generations seem, in some senses, to be disappearing. It requires considerable faith and self-effacement on our part to prepare the ground for the faith journey of others without having any reassurance that this will ultimately prove successful.

For some of our family, friends and neighbours, we ourselves will be the only Gospel that they ever read, the only sermon they will ever hear. It's not so much a question of thinking up clever and convincing arguments as of living our faith genuinely and convincingly. We may not always be able to use overtly religious language with those who are unable to accept it, but within the widest implications of our living justly, loving tenderly and walking humbly, there lie the seeds of faith, waiting to grow in God's good time and in ways that perhaps only God can see. The Fourth Eucharistic Prayer prays for “all who seek you with a sincere heart [...] and all the dead, whose faith you alone have known”. Faith is found and fostered in many hidden ways. The challenge to us is to have confidence in God's call even when we cannot see the proof.

Every baptised person shares in the threefold ministry of Christ as prophet, priest and king. We are prophetic when our faiths open up paths of faith for others. We are priestly when we affirm the sacredness of life in every human person and in our universe, and we are proclaimers of the kingdom when we do justice in all our social and personal relationships. That is how Advent is lived within the world.

Living the Word