



# CHURCH OF ST. IGNATIUS LOYOLA

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**Third Sunday of Advent**

## *ADVENT: Preparing the Way*

In the Prologue of the Gospel of John (chapter 1.1-18)—recognized as one of the great pieces of poetic literature in the Western world—we read about the journey of the Word throughout time. The “Word” (Logos in John’s Greek parlance) means the revelation or communication of God. By casting God’s revelation as Logos, the author presupposes, then, that God, though in essence a holy mystery, is yet intelligible; able to be comprehended and recognized, if not understood entirely by humankind.

The Prologue proceeds to use beautiful and sublime images and symbols to describe the Word and its journey: *the Word was with God and is God; it is life that is our light; the Word and its light was given to John the Baptizer who bore witness to it; the Word was then given to everyone; and people can accept or refuse the Word.*

I call our attention to this Prologue because in many ways the journey of the Word closely parallels the liturgical journey of Advent in which we find ourselves today, in the middle of this holy season.

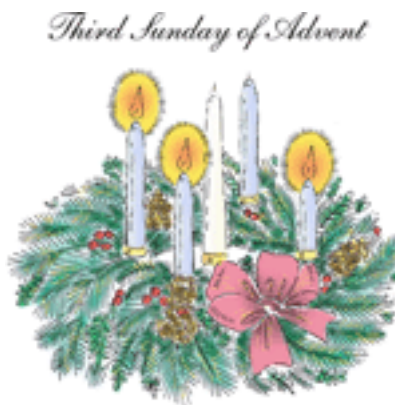
We began Advent two short weeks ago, gathered around a wreath with candles—symbolic of the Word that is our life and light. We were reminded that even in this season, in the cycle of nature in which life dies off and the days grow shorter, God’s presence—the Word—can still be found in the greenery of pine trees and light of fire.

If Advent is about anything at all, it is about God’s promise to break forth into the darkness of a cold

winter. And so we were invited to examine where our own hearts might need God’s light and life: “Repent!” was the message of John the Baptizer. Advent, as a time of preparation, firsts asks us to be in touch with our need for God’s Word.

Am I completely content, or do I hunger and thirst? Do I desire God’s life and light? Am I open to the reality that God speaks a word to me - mediated through my daily experience, my friends and foes, my family and co-workers, even through seemingly mundane exchanges with strangers.?

Where is God working to bring something new in my life?



So we gathered at the beginning of Advent to strengthen our hope that no darkness can overwhelm God’s light—whether that darkness is our own sin; or any other evil power that exists in the world, both in the present time, and in the future. We gathered to strengthen our hope that God’s promise can be trusted, and the Word is faithful.

But the journey of the Word described in John’s Prologue, and its parallel to our Advent journey, leads us further. For as striking and powerful as John’s Prologue is, it does not reach its true apex—as a piece of dramatic literature or theology—until the fourteenth verse: “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father.”

We are now moving close to the great celebration of the Nativity, and soon, our Advent wreath will give way to a creche. The symbols and images

change from greenery and candles to a baby born in a manger. This is a gift beyond all measure. Receiving its fullness of grace and truth and beholding His glory invites yet more Advent preparation on our part.

The scripture scholar Stanley Marrow, SJ offers these comments on the gift of the Incarnation:

*Our insistence on the divinity at the cost of the humanity stems not from any excess of love and veneration for the Word that “was God.” It stems rather from our inveterate conviction that we do really deserve a first-class revelation, and not one that labors under the impenetrable opacities of the human condition. When the evangelist affirms, “we have beheld his glory,” he means with eyes that beheld no more than yours or mine when we look at one another.*



Rogier van der Weyden, 1445-50

**“The Word became flesh  
✠ and dwelt among us, full of  
grace and truth;...”**

**A**s we continue our journey toward Christmas, let us ask God for the grace to open our eyes to behold the Word made flesh in all of its glory—“hiding” as it does in our humanity—and let us pray for the faith to believe that this Word is still incarnate in every person we behold.

**Fr. Chris Devron, S.J.**