

FAITH AT FIVE

SUNDAY 6 DECEMBER 2020

THE SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: THE FEAST OF ST. NICHOLAS



Our liturgy this evening draws from The Anglican Church in Scotland where Roddy Hamilton created a Liturgy for Holy Eucharist when children — children of all ages — are present. Today, December 6th, is “The Feast of St Nicholas.” The true story of Santa Claus begins with Nicholas who was born during the third century in the village of Patara in Asia Minor. At the time the area was Greek and is now on the southern coast of Turkey. His wealthy parents, who raised him to be a devout Christian, died in an epidemic while Nicholas was still young. Obeying Jesus’ words to “sell what you own and give the money to the poor,” Nicholas used his whole inheritance to assist the needy, the sick, and the suffering. He dedicated his life to serving God and was made Bishop of Myra while still a young man. Bishop Nicholas became known throughout the land for his generosity to those in need, his love for children, his concern for sailors and ships and as a model for the compassionate life. His simple gift-giving in early Advent helps preserve a Christmas Day focus on the GIFT OF THE CHRIST CHILD.

Gathering Music (*Sung by the music team; the congregation is invited to listen*)

tune: Londonderry Air

Each year we celebrate with joy the coming
Of that great Saint of old, we love so dear.
His legends are the stories we all cherish,
They call to mind that Christmas now is near

*O great St Nicholas, we hail and greet you,
We thank you for the good news that you bring.
O lead us on to Bethlehem, the Manger,
Where we can pray and joyous songs forever sing.*

Your love of children, marks your way of caring.
The students three, new life you bring to be.
The sailors, soldiers and the ones in prison,
Your power and prayer, the miracles we see.
Refrain

Dear saint, your name brings hope and consolation
To people poor and those who suffer wrong.
The celebrations and the joy and splendor
Become the theme and message of our song.
Refrain

We now receive the gifts you freely give us,
As tokens of your generosity,
That we must imitate and share the goodness
We at this season in each other see.
Refrain

Invitation

Come everyone who wants to come.
Come if you can recite the creeds,
Come if you can't remember the words to “Jesus Loves Me”;
Come if you've been in the church since birth,
Come if you've lost your way a few times but found your way here today;
Come if you like to study theology,
Come if you like to finger paint;
Come if you like tradition and ritual and ceremony,
Come if you like balloons and laughter and jumping in puddles.
Come if you like all these things
and find the wonder of heaven in them all.

Come as you are:
old and young.
Just as you are:
one family,
right now,
each of you,
every one of you,
and have a place right here with
one another.

Opening Sentences

In the beginning, when it was dark, God said, "Let there be light."
And there was light.

(The sign of light - a lighted candle - is placed on a central table)

In the beginning, when it was quiet, The Word was with God.
And the Word was God.

(The sign of the Word - an open Bible - is placed on the table.)

When the time was right, God sent His Son.
He came among us and was one of us.

(The Sign of the Son - a cross - is placed on the table.)

Song of Prayer: *(Sung by the music team; the congregation is invited to listen)*

Come, thou fount of every blessing, tune my heart to sing thy grace!
Streams of mercy never ceasing, call for songs of loudest praise.
Teach me some melodious sonnet, sung by flaming tongues above.
Praise the mount! Oh, fix me on it, mount of God's unchanging love

Leader The God of Love is with us.

People **The Spirit of love is in us.**

Leader Blessed be God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

People **And blessed be God's kingdom, now and forever. Amen**

Leader Let us pray.

Almighty and eternal God, to you our hearts are open and our inmost desires are known. We cannot hide our most intimate secrets from you. We ask you to be present at all times in our thoughts and our hearts, and to purify them, so that we may love you with the love of the Holy Spirit and praise your name with humility and joy; Through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

The Lighting of the Advent Candle

Today we light the first and second candles of the Advent Wreath. Each candle has a meaning. The first candle is the candle of HOPE, the second candle is the candle of PEACE. Let us Pray: Almighty God, you offer rest to our hearts and peace to our souls. Give us the grace to seek peace in our lives, peace in this community and peace in the world. Through Jesus Christ, The Prince of Peace. **Amen.**

Hymn of Praise: *(Sung by the music team; the congregation is invited to listen)*

O come, O come, thou Lord of might, who to thy tribes on Sinai's height
in ancient times didst give the law, in cloud, and majesty, and awe
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

O come, thou Branch of Jesse's tree, free them from Satan's tyranny
that trust thy mighty power to save, and give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel!

The Word of God: A Reading from Isaiah (40:1–11)

Our God has said: "Encourage my people! Give them comfort. Speak kindly to Jerusalem and announce: Your slavery is past & your punishment is over. I, the Lord, made you pay double for your sins." Someone is shouting: "Clear a path in the desert! Make a straight road for the Lord our God. Fill in the valleys; flatten every hill and mountain. Level the rough and rugged ground. Then the glory of the Lord will appear for all to see. The Lord has promised this! Someone told me to shout, and I asked, "What should I shout?" We humans

are merely grass, and we last no longer At the Lord's command, flowers and grass disappear, and so do we. Flowers and grass fade away, but what our God has said will never change. There is good news for the city of Zion. Shout it as loud as you can[from the highest mountain. Don't be afraid to shout to the towns of Judah, "Your God is here!" Look! The powerful Lord God is coming to rule with his mighty arm. He brings with him what he has taken in war, and he rewards his people. The Lord cares for his nation, just as shepherds care for their flocks. He carries the lambs in his arms, while gently leading the mother sheep.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

1 Peter 3: 8–15

Summing up: Be agreeable, be sympathetic, be loving, be compassionate, be humble. That goes for all of you, no exceptions. No retaliation. No sharp-tongued sarcasm. Instead, bless—that's your job, to bless. You'll be a blessing and also get a blessing. Whoever wants to embrace life and see the day fill up with good, Here's what you do: Say nothing evil or hurtful; Snub evil and cultivate good; run after peace for all you're worth. God looks on all this with approval, listening and responding well to what he's asked; But he turns his back on those who do evil things. If with heart and soul you're doing good, do you think you can be stopped? Even if you suffer for it, you're still better off. Don't give the opposition a second thought. Through thick and thin, keep your hearts at attention, in adoration before Christ, your Master. Be ready to speak up and tell anyone who asks why you're living the way you are, and always with the utmost courtesy. Keep a clear conscience before God so that when people throw mud at you, none of it will stick. They'll end up realizing that they're the ones who need a bath. It's better to suffer for doing good, if that's what God wants, than to be punished for doing bad. That's what Christ did definitively: suffered because of others' sins, the Righteous One for the unrighteous ones. He went through it all—was put to death and then made alive—to bring us to God.

Hear what the Spirit is saying to God's people.

People **Thanks be to God.**

Sequence Hymn:

I Saw Three Ships

The saint of Christmas now we see,
St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas,
He comes with gifts and glad are we,
St. Nicholas, pray with us.

For children, sailors, everywhere,
St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas,
He offers help and tender care,
St. Nicholas, pray with us.

His stories and his legends bold,
St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas,
They bring great joy to young and old,
St. Nicholas, pray with us.

The Child of Bethlehem we seek,
St. Nicholas, St. Nicholas,
Show us the Child and Mother meek,
St. Nicholas, pray with us.

The Holy Gospel:

Priest The Holy Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to Mark (1:1–8)

People **Glory to you, Lord Christ.**

This is the good news about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It began just as God had said in the book written by Isaiah the prophet, "I am sending my messenger to get the way ready for you. In the desert someone is shouting, 'Get the road ready for the Lord! Make a straight path for him.'" So John the Baptist showed up in the desert and told everyone, "Turn back to God and be baptized! Then your sins will be forgiven." From all Judea and Jerusalem crowds of people went to John. They told how sorry they were for their sins, and he baptized them in the Jordan River. John wore clothes made of camel's hair. He had a leather strap around his

(Continued overleaf.)

waist and ate grasshoppers and wild honey. John also told the people, "Someone more powerful is going to come. And I am not good enough even to stoop down and untie his sandals.[b] 8 I baptize you with water, but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit!

Priest The Gospel of the Lord.
People **Praise to you, Lord Christ.**

Message:

The Story of St. Nicholas

Affirmation of Faith

**You, O God, are supreme and holy.
You create our world and give us life.
Your purpose overarches everything we do.
You have always been with us.
You are God.**

**You, O God, are infinitely generous,
good beyond all measure.
You came to us before we came to you.
You have revealed and proved
your love for us in Jesus Christ,
who lived and died and rose again.
You are with us now.
You are God.**

**You, O God, are Holy Spirit.
You empower us to be your gospel in the world.
You reconcile and heal; you overcome death.
You are our God. We worship you.**

Prayers of the People

Leader Lord Jesus Christ,
People **Be with us, within us, behind us and before us.**

Leader We bind ourselves, O God, today, to the strong name of the Trinity,
People **And we name you: Three in One, One in Three; and claim our place in your community of love.**

Leader We are embraced, loving God, in the community that is the heart not just of our church, but also in the community that is the very heart of who you are,
People **Three in One; Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Leader Within that great love, we are held and treasured. Lord, hear our prayers this evening;
People **We pray for our hurting world.**

Leader That war-makers will find peace. That the hungry will find food. That refugees will find shelter. That injustice will be answered with all that is right and good.
People **We pray for all who suffer.**

Leader For those we love dearly. For those we barely know. For those whose suffering, we have ignored. Be present in the healing touch of all hands that help the sick and suffering. And send your Spirit to comfort and protect all who need you.

People **We pray for all who struggle.**

Leader For those who cannot see a way through broken relationships, difficult financial realities, emotional darkness, and deep, deep loneliness. May we find you even in the most helpless places. And may we, your people, be present also in those places, bringing Good News and hope to all who are longing for the true life that only you can provide.

People **We pray for all who are joyful.**

Leader We rejoice at the promise of new life, and the goodness of each new day. We celebrate the movement through milestones: births, graduations, new jobs, new relationships; and the hopes that they bring. We remember those moments of blessing in our own lives and we thank you for the opportunity to use our lives to your glory, to live lives that are full and worthy of your calling.

We lift up to you, Lord, the prayers that you've placed on our hearts in our own words at this time...

We will intentionally PAUSE for the community present to share their requests, thanksgivings, desires, hopes & joys either out loud or silently.

We bind ourselves, O God, today, to the strong name of the Trinity.

People **And we name you: Three in One, One in Three: and claim our place in your community of love.**

Leader Lord Jesus Christ

People **Be with us, within us, behind us, before us. Amen.**

Confession of Sin

Happy are those whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned.
I will confess my sins to the Lord, I will not conceal my wrongdoings.

Silence

God forgives and heals us.

We need your healing, merciful God:

give us true repentance.

Some sins are plain to us;

some escape us,

some we cannot face.

Forgive us;

set us free to hear your word to us;

set us free to serve you.

God forgives you.

Forgive others;

forgive yourself.

Silence

Through Christ, God has put away your sin:
approach your God in peace.

The Peace

The peace of the Lord be always with you.

And also with you.

THE HOLY EUCHARIST

Music at the Offertory: "Jesus Loves Me"

(Sung by the music team; the congregation is invited to listen)

Voice 1:

I bring bread. Those who are hungry for food and those who are fed but hunger for God's Love, this table is our meeting place, this bread, our nourishment.

Voice 2:

I bring wine. Those who are thirsty for water and those who are filled but thirst for righteousness, this table is where God's Love is met, this wine, the sign of blessing. Come all who thirst.

Welcome

This is an open table
and all those who love God
and seek to love God more are welcome

so come with your questions and your doubts
come with your living done and undone
come with all that you are and all who you are
for here we meet Jesus in bread and wine
around a table God has set
Your seat is waiting.

Institution

On the Thursday night
Jesus gathered with his friends in an upper room.
They shared a meal together.
Then as darkness fell
Jesus broke some bread
and took some wine
and asked his friends to remember him
every time they broke bread together.

And because we are his disciples today
we remember that story
and how the story continues in this place today
and we remember Jesus
as we break this bread together
and share this wine with each other

We are doing as Jesus asked us to do
and we are glad to do so.

Prayer of Thanksgiving

Great God
of all the things you have created
we take the simplest food
and find you among us
as we eat together

In the great story of Jesus
we hear your love for us
being retold
and we remember all Jesus has done for us
because of that love

Through the Spirit
you set this bread and wine apart
to be used only as an image of you
and your love for us

For this gift of bread and wine
that reminds us of all those other gifts you have given us
we sing with every person who has been at this table
in every time and in every place

**Holy, holy, holy God
God of power and might
heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest**

**Blessed is the one who comes in the name of God
Hosanna in the highest**

And so we thank you
that you have called us your children
sharing with us a love
that is more powerful than the universe
and that you sit here with us
blessing us in bread and wine . **Amen**

Breaking of Bread

Jesus took bread
broke it
Saying:
'This is my body broken for you.
Remember me when you do this'

And Jesus took wine
lifted it
saying:
'This cup is a symbol of my covenant with you.
Remember me when you drink from it'

It looks like bread, and it is bread.
But God is incredibly imaginative.
There is a surprise in this bread ,
for within each crumb,
God has folded nothing less, than heaven.

And when we break it,
and everyone has a piece,
what we are doing is saying,
“Let’s share together the story of Jesus.”

It looks like a goblet of wine, and it is wine,
but God, being God, didn’t leave it there,
and has squeezed into each drop,
a promise for the whole world.

And when we pass it among us,
and everyone has a taste,
it sort of whispers to our souls,
and sort of tangles with memories,
telling us:
God loves us,
God loves us,
God loves us,
completely.

So let's break bread and listen to the story,
and share wine and hear the promise.

Lord's Prayer *(Celebrant and People)*

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your Name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those
who sin against us.
Save us from the time of trial,
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

We break this bread
to share in the Body of Christ.
**We who are many are one body,
for we all share in the one bread.**

Music during Eucharist: *(Sung by the music team; the congregation is invited to listen)*

All who hunger gather gladly; holy manna is our bread.
Come from wilderness and wand'ring. Here in truth we will be fed.
You that yearn for days of fullness, all around us is our food.
Taste and see the grace eternal. Taste and see that God is good.

All who hunger, never strangers, seeker, be a welcome guest.
Come from restlessness and roaming. Here, in joy we keep the feast.
We that once were lost and scattered in communion's love have stood.
Taste and see the grace eternal. Taste and see that God is good.

All who hunger, sing together, Jesus Christ is living bread.
Come from loneliness and longing. Here, in peace, we have been fed.
Blest are those who from this table live their days in gratitude.
Taste and see the grace eternal. Taste and see that God is good.

Post-Communion Prayer *(Celebrant and People)*

**Loving God,
we give you thanks
for restoring us in your image
and nourishing us with spiritual food
in the Sacrament of Christ's Body and Blood.
Now send us forth
a people, forgiven, healed, renewed;
that we may proclaim your love to the world
and continue in the risen life of Christ our Savior. Amen.**

Night Prayer

Lord,
It is night.

The night is for stillness.
Let us be still in the presence of God.

It is night after a long day.
What has been done has been done;
What has not been done has not been done;
Let it be.

The night is dark.
Let our fears of the darkness of the world
And in our lives rest in you.

The night is quiet.
Let the quietness of your peace enfold us,
All dear to us,
And all who have no peace.

The night heralds the dawn.
Let us look expectantly to a new day,
New joys,
New possibilities.

In your name we pray. **AMEN**

Blessing

Life is short, and we do not have too much time to gladden the hearts of those who travel with us. So be swift to love. Make haste to be kind, and the blessing of God be with you always. **AMEN.**

Closing Song

Give thanks with a grateful heart;
Give thanks to the Holy One;
Give thanks because He's given Jesus Christ, His Son.

And now let the weak say, "I am strong,"
Let the poor say, "I am rich,
Because of what the Lord has done for us"

Dismissal



MT. LEBANON CHAPEL

ST. JAMES PARISH

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