



## Thoughts on Advent

Advent is the shortest season in the liturgical year. It's like a tiny jewel. In the space of four weeks we go from the end of the world to the birth of the Messiah—and we have many impressive encounters along the way. The thunder of John the Baptist is here. The quiet fiat of the Virgin Mary is here. Old Testament prophets speak words of hope and consolation.

There are two prefaces for Advent—one used only during the last eight days of the season: those days when the O Antiphons are sung at Evening Prayer. For the shortest season of the year to actually have a “season within a season” of the octave preceding Christmas is another of Advent’s small wonders.

The two prefaces for Advent are fruit of the reform of the liturgy at Vatican II (there was only one prior). Both are remarkably beautiful. The first recalls the Incarnation as the fulfillment of God’s plan for our salvation, and colors our Advent waiting with eschatological hope.

He assumed at his first coming the lowliness of human flesh, and so fulfilled the design you formed long ago, and opened for us the way to eternal salvation, so that when he comes again in glory and majesty and all is at last made manifest, we who watch for that day may inherit the great promise in which we now dare to hope.]

The second preface evokes the heralds of Christ’s coming: the prophets, Mary, John the Baptist. At the end of the preface we are welcomed into their circle. We too are there. Here is the marvelous section in which we take our place among the heralds of Christ. “He it is who grants our anticipating with joy the mystery of his birth, so that he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise.”

The candles of the Advent wreath, the hymns of the season, the colors of purple and blue, all sing to us of Christ, who is coming. The season passes so quickly! Treasure it while you can.

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**Funeral Rites Led by Lay Ministers**—“The Hope That Lies Before Us”—the report that deals with the shortage of priests in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, says that lay persons “...are to be prepared to preside over funeral rites.” In case the pastor is ill, away or otherwise not available to preside at funeral rites, lay persons have been prepared and trained to lead these rites which include the Vigil Service, the Funeral Liturgy and the Committal Service.



**All married couples** are cordially invited to join Archbishop Edwin O’Brien for the special World Marriage Day Mass and Reception at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, 5200 N. Charles Street (*not the Basilica downtown*), on **February 12, 2012 at 3:00 P.M.** The Mass will be

bilingual in English and Spanish and interpreted for the deaf.

**CELEBRATING 25 or More YEARS?** Couples celebrating 25 or more year anniversaries in 2012, register for recognition online by clicking on the World Marriage Day Button at <http://wwme.net/>, or by email to: [BaltimoreAnniversaries@gmail.com](mailto:BaltimoreAnniversaries@gmail.com) or by phone to Committee Chairs, Chris and Darla Phillips, 410-987-4210 by **January 29, 2012**, to receive special recognition at the Mass, Feb. 12, at the Cathedral of Mary Our Queen, 5200 N. Charles Street, Homeland (21210) and a letter of congratulations from the archbishop.

**SEEKING OUR LONGEST MARRIED COUPLE:** Our parish is participating in Worldwide Marriage Encounter’s search for the longest married couple in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. **One couple** from each parish will be honored during a special Mass celebrated by Archbishop Edwin O’Brien. Please let us know in the parish office if you have been married at least 50 years, no later than **January 24, 2012.**