



SPIRIT OF THE MOUNTAIN CLUSTER

NOVEMBER 30-December 1, 2024

1st Sunday of Advent (Year C)

Reverend Emmanuel Darfour Appah, Administrator

Saint Mary Catholic Church

109 Beech Ave., PO Box 1724

Coeburn, VA 24230

Saturday Vigil Mass @ 5 PM

Reconciliation Saturday @ 4:30 PM

Tuesday Mass @ 5 PM

Saint Therese Catholic Church

16661 Wise St., PO Box 56

St. Paul, VA 24283

Sunday Mass @ 8:30 AM

Reconciliation Sunday 8:00 AM

Good Shepherd Catholic Church

890 W Main St., PO Box 730

Lebanon, VA 24266-0730

Sunday Mass 11:00 AM

Reconciliation Sunday @ 10:30 AM

Wednesday Mass @ 6 PM

CLUSTER CONTACT INFORMATION

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Office e-mail: office@spiritofthemountain.org

Website: <https://spiritofthemountain.org/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100078972283533>

EMERGENCY: NEED A PRIEST? CALL 1-804-631-9027

or eappah@richmonddiocese.org

Reflection for 1st Sunday of Advent Year C

Theme: Preparing for the coming to Christ

The First Sunday of Advent marks the beginning of a new liturgical year and a time of spiritual preparation. Advent invites us to prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ both at Christmas and His final coming in glory. The Gospel reading for this Sunday is part of Jesus' discourse about the end times. He speaks of signs in the heavens, distress among nations, and the shaking of the heavens. Amid this chaos, He calls His followers to stand firm and hold their heads high because their redemption is near.

Our readings for today sets a tone of watchfulness and hope. It reminds us that while the world may seem unstable and uncertain, God's plan is unfolding, and His promises will be fulfilled. The coming of Christ is not something to fear but to anticipate with joy, as it brings redemption and the fullness of God's kingdom.

Advent challenges us to live with a sense of readiness. Jesus warns against becoming drowsy with the anxieties and distractions of life. It is easy to become so consumed by daily concerns that we lose sight of God's presence and purposes. This season calls us to refocus, to awaken from spiritual slumber, and to live in a way that reflects our faith and hope in Christ.

Waiting in Advent is not passive but active. We prepare by deepening our prayer life, growing in love for others, and seeking reconciliation with God and those around us. It is a time to declutter our hearts from whatever keeps us from fully embracing God's love and to make room for Christ to dwell within us.

The reading also reminds us to trust in God's faithfulness. Though the signs Jesus

describes seem unsettling, they point to His ultimate victory. Advent invites us to look beyond the darkness of the world and see the light of Christ breaking through. This hope gives us the courage to persevere, even in challenging times, and to live as people of the light.

As we begin this holy season, let us take time to reflect on how we can prepare our hearts for Christ's coming. Are we vigilant in prayer and faithful in our daily lives? Are we actively building God's kingdom through acts of love and service? This Advent, let us stand ready, with hearts full of hope and anticipation, trusting in the God who comes to save us.

Peace and Joy!!

Readings for this Week (December 1-7, 2024)

01 DEC SUN	Jeremiah 33:14-16; Psalm 25;1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2; Luke 21:25-28, 34-36
02 DEC MON	Isaiah 2 :1-5 ; Psalm 122 ; Matthew 8:5-11
03 DEC TUE	Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72; Luke 10:21-24
04 DEC WED	Isaiah 25:6-10; Psalm 23; Matthew 15:29-37
05 DEC THU	Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118; Matthew 7:21, 24-27
06 DEC FRI	Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27; Matthew 9:27-31
07 DEC SAT	Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147; Matthew 9:35-10:1, 6-8

Next Sunday Readings – 2nd Sunday of Advent (December 8, 2024)

Baruch 5:1-9; Psalm 126; Philipians 1:4-6, 8-11; Luke 3:1-6

Retired Religious Diocesan Collection next weekend: **December 7/8** is scheduled for a special second collection for the retirement fund for religious. Aging religious you're your help. "Your support acknowledges that we continue the mission of Christ even in our retirement," says Mission Helpers of the Sacred Heart Sister Celeste Burgos, 80. Donations provide for the care, medicine, and daily needs of over 24,000 senior sisters, brothers, and religious order priests who have dedicated their lives to service. Please give to the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Next Sunday, December 8 is a holy day (Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary). **NOTE: The *Holy Day of Obligation* is transferred to December 9 in 2024.** Mass will be celebrated at St. Mary's at 4 PM and Good Shepherd at 6 PM on Monday, December 9.

iGiveCatholic. It is time for this special fund-raising event. Advance giving began Monday, November 18. **The BIG DAY is Tuesday, December 3.**

Late Breaking News: The Diocese has just informed the church office a special **MATCHING GIFT** opportunity for donors to take advantage of on Giving Tuesday! A \$10,000 Matching Gift, \$1:\$1, will take place on Giving Tuesday, Dec. 3rd from 12:00PM-1:00PM. Note: it is a first come-first served opportunity. Contact the office if you have any questions.

Be sure to check out our stories online St. Mary <https://tinyurl.com/3bmj7jtr>
St. Therese <https://tinyurl.com/ym539spm> Good Shepherd <https://tinyurl.com/2c4ypnc7>

Word Among Us Advent booklets for November are available at the back of the church.

Food Donations continued to be collected by Good Shepherd for the Lebanon Community Food Pantry. A basket is at the back of the church. Items needed are canned fruit, vegetables, soup, and meat. Father Emmanuel is happy to transport items from St. Mary and St. Therese.

Save the Date! Diocesan Work Camp. June 21-27, 2025. Bristol, VA. Are you looking for an immersive experience of Christian service, prayer, and community for your teens? Join us at Diocesan Work Camp for a week that will give direct assistance to the local community and transform your youth ministry culture! Each day starts with daily Mass before heading out to work sites; each night has programming and prayer. A unique benefit of Diocesan Work Camp is that your parish gets to build friendships with other parishes in our own state. Save the date; more information will be available soon!

Mark your calendars! Join the Office for Evangelization, Bishop Knestout, and the entire diocese at a one-day festival in Richmond. We'll see you on October 11, **2025**, at The Diamond Baseball Stadium in Richmond, Virginia for a day of music, food, fun, fellowship, and celebrating the Mass as the Diocese of Richmond. Stay tuned for more updates throughout the year, including an event the day before in Richmond just for **young adults!**

Catholic Community Foundation of the Diocese of Richmond's topic for December is Yearend Giving – This is the season we give thanks to God for all He has done for us this past year and throughout our lives. It is also a good time to begin considering how you can give back with a special year-end gift. Gifting is a great way to thank God for these blessings. Take advantage of the charitable tax deduction for gifts made before December 31 (benefits of income tax deductions, capital gains savings, and other financial benefits), and consider the variety of gift options available to you. Your gift to our parish can make a great difference. There are a variety of ways you can contribute a gift. The easiest and most direct methods are donations of cash, stock, and an IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution. For more information on how you can help make a difference by contributing a year-end gift to our parish, please contact the parish office.

The Spirit of the Mountain Cluster and our Catholic Diocese of Richmond Bishop Knestout encourages anyone aware of sexual abuse of minors on the part of clergy or staff of our diocese to notify civil authorities, call the Attorney General's Clergy Abuse Hotline at 1-833-454-9064 and reach out to the Diocesan Victim Assistance Coordinator at 1-877-887-9603, or email vac@richmonddiocese.org or visit the Diocese's Child Protection/Safe Environment page at <https://richmonddiocese.org/protecting-gods-children/>

SAINT MARY CATHOLIC CHURCH

November 23 Offertory \$ 530.00 **Attendance 17**

November 23 Votive Candles Donation \$ 4.00

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR: Alton Lawson, Jr., Sister Stacey Hanrahan, Lillie Peters, Billy Hunsaker, Charles Bennett, and Bobby Kyle.

December Birthdays: Mike O'Donnell (16), Josh Lawson (27).

SAINT THERESE CATHOLIC CHURCH

November 24 Offertory \$ 125.00 **Attendance 7**

November 24 Donation \$ 200.00

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR: Tim Long, Jackie White, Helen Moretz, James F. White, Brayn Whited, JoAnn Detta, and Rodney Altizer.

December Birthdays: Chinchinto Hernandez (18)

GOOD SHEPHERD CATHOLIC CHURCH

November 24 Offertory	\$ 378.00	Attendance 33
November 24 Votive Candles Offering	\$ 7.00	
November 24 Jose Village Collection	\$ 50.00	
November 24 Donation	\$ 200.00	

PRAYERS REQUESTED FOR: Valerie Christian, James White, Bob Dorton, JoAnn Detta, Jackie White, Phyllis Dotson, and Sherry Hubbard.

December Birthdays: Dave Spoharski (2), Jeff Halsey (11); James White (13); Ana Giles/Brittany Trebing (14)

- **Parish council this Sunday, December 1 after Mass.**

Lector Schedule:

December 1 – Frank Taylor
December 18/15 – Cathy Stiltner
December 22/25/29 – Dave Britten

THE SEASON OF ADVENT

Advent is a season of hope, waiting, and spiritual preparation as we look forward to the coming of Christ. The word Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming" or "arrival." During this sacred time, the Church invites us to prepare in three ways: to remember Christ's first coming in Bethlehem, to welcome His presence into our lives today, and to anticipate His glorious return at the end of time.

Advent is a season of contrasts. It is a time of quiet reflection amid the busyness of the world, a period of anticipation and joy as we look forward to celebrating Christmas. The Advent wreath, with its four candles, marks the weeks leading to Christmas. Each candle symbolizes key themes of the season—hope, peace, joy, and love—reminding us that Christ's light is steadily breaking into the darkness of the world.

This season challenges us to slow down and reflect on what truly matters. Advent is not just about preparing outwardly with decorations or gifts but preparing inwardly by making space in our hearts for Christ. It is a time to grow closer to God through prayer, repentance, and acts of kindness. We are called to watch and wait with expectant hope, trusting that God's promises are unfolding in our lives.

Advent also calls us to recognize the ways Christ comes to us every day. He comes in the Eucharist, in Scripture, in our prayer, and in the people around us, especially in the poor, the lonely, and the suffering. This season invites us to be more attentive to His presence and to respond with love and generosity.

Ultimately, Advent is a season of hope. It reminds us that no matter how dark the world may seem, the light of Christ is always shining, and His kingdom is near. It calls us to trust in God's faithfulness and to live as people who are preparing not only for Christmas but for eternity.

As we journey through this beautiful season, let us ask ourselves: How can I make more room for Christ in my life? How can I share His light with others? May Advent be a time of renewal, drawing us closer to God and one another as we prepare to welcome the King of Kings into our hearts.