



Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast

December 17, 2023: The Third Sunday in Advent

Taking a Step Back: What is Advent?

Advent is a Christian season of waiting and preparation for the birth of Christ at Christmas and the return of Christ at the Second Coming. It is observed in most Christian denominations and marks the beginning of the Western Christian worship year. The name "Advent" comes from the Latin word "adventus," meaning "coming" or "arrival," and usually is used in translations of the Greek word "parousia" from the New Testament, originally referring to the Second Coming. Most Christians are familiar with the first Christian meaning of Advent, but in my experience not many associate Advent with the second, and final, coming of Christ...a point of reflection!



Different denominations observe different practices during Advent: lighting candles in an Advent wreath, praying an Advent daily devotional, putting up a Christmas tree or displaying Chrismons ("Christ monograms," white and gold designs made from Christian symbols that signify Christ), lighting a Christingle ("Christ Angel"), and other ways of preparing for Christmas, such as setting up Christmas decorations. Advent calendars are also popular, with many different types available, including ones with chocolates, toys, or other small gifts behind each door. [note: a Christingle to the left is usually made with an orange representing the world; a candle in the center of the orange representing Christ, the light of the world; a red ribbon around the orange representing the blood of Christ, and dried fruit or candy on sticks around the candle representing the fruits of the earth and the four seasons.]

In this third week of Advent...

Mary Visits Elizabeth

In those days Mary set out and went with haste to a Judean town in the hill country, where she entered the house of Zechariah and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leaped in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. And why has this happened to me, that the mother of my Lord comes to me? For as soon as I heard the sound of your greeting, the child in my womb leaped for joy. And blessed is she who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord." (Luke 1:39-45, NRSV)

The pink candle in the Advent wreath is generally lit on the third Sunday of Advent: it represents joy. Each candle in the advent wreath has a significant meaning, but in most Advent wreaths, the "joy" candle is the one candle that is a different color than the others. There is something special and celebratory about the theme of the third week of Advent compared to the others. In Luke's reading for this week, we hear Elizabeth exclaim: "the child in my womb leaped for joy!" That child was Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist. May each of us find our own "joy" this week during our Advent journey! - Vance



Prayer box: Stir up our joy, O Lord, as we anticipate your coming among us. Though we are hindered by darkness and doubt, let your mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and forever. And Lord, bring comfort to those people in Tennessee who have been hit with tornados; continue healing for Liz and Maggie, and all caregivers; bring peace in the Middle East and Ukraine; Lord, hear our prayer! **Amen**