



Advent/Christmas 2022

reflecting the sacred

Fully-scripted worship series based on RCL Year A
and Richard Rohr's Universal Christ

Scriptures and Synopses

*“The Word became flesh and made a home among us.”
John 1: 1-14 (CEB)*

The Christmas season is a time when the juxtaposition of the sacred and secular feels sometimes blatantly opposed, and sometimes quite blurred. The word “sacred” points to something dedicated as “holy” and “set apart.” This year, you are invited to a spiritual journey of seeing ALL things pregnant with the Holy. What could our experience of the Advent and Christmas season be like if we lived it imagining that everything is reflecting the sacred?

Advent One – Sacred Time (Hope)

“... you know what time it is. The hour has already come for you to wake up from your sleep... the night is far gone, the day is near.” - Romans 13: 11-14

“Keep awake therefore, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.” - Matthew 24: 36-44

The busy-ness of the holiday season can overrun the sense of the sacred. The irony is that setting apart time for connection with the sacred gets pushed aside in order to create the trappings of what is supposed to be the season of celebrating the incarnation of the Holy! We will begin our Advent journey toward Christmas by emphasizing the gift of being awake to the “now”... the gift of sacred time with God, with each other, and with those in need of hope.

Advent Two – Sacred People (Love)

“May the God of steadfastness and encouragement grant you to live in harmony with one another, in accordance with Christ Jesus...” - Romans 15: 4-13

“This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, ‘The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.’” - Matthew 3: 1-12

When we look through the lens of the sacred, we prepare our senses to recognize the holy in all people—to come to know them in a “steadfast and encouraging” way. Our world is crying out for harmony and being able to see the Christ reflected in each other makes a path for this to be accomplished. We are inspired this week to see our own walk upon this earth as part of the call to be sacred people who usher in the presence of love.

Advent Three – Sacred Space (Joy)

“...the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with singing; everlasting joy shall be upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.” - Isaiah 35: 1-10

“My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for the Holy One has looked with favor on the lowliness of his servant. Surely, from now on all generations will call me blessed...” - Luke 1: 46b-55

The pregnancy of Mary is connected to the promise of justice and joy in the readings this week. Mary’s womb becomes a sacred space for the gestation of grace that moves into, and is transforming, the world. We will ponder the spaces we inhabit at home, work, and community, asking whether they are feeding, nurturing, and reflecting the freedom and joy that is so desperately needed.

Advent Four – Sacred Knowing (Peace)

“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.” - Isaiah 7: 10-16

“Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a righteous man and unwilling to expose her to public disgrace, planned to dismiss her quietly. But just when he had resolved to do this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife, for the child conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.” - Matthew 1: 18-25

Many of us look for signs to help us know what to do, or we wish we could have our own personal angel visit us to let us know the “right” next steps. Uncertainty is a fact of life—this seems ever more true. This week we will remember that there is a Christ within us constantly birthing wisdom and a deep knowing if we will but listen with a contemplative heart. Let us seek out quiet in order to hear the voice that brings peace by gently saying, “do not be afraid.”

Christmas Eve – Sacred Being

“But when the goodness and loving kindness of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit.” - Titus 3: 4-7 (Proper II)

“... she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger...” - Luke 2: 1-20

It is not difficult to imagine this night as “reflecting the sacred.” We gather and sing and light candles and dare to believe that love truly enters the world time and again and anything is possible. What may be more difficult to understand, however, is that this love is ours, not because we’ve been “good” (as if God is Santa Claus), but simply because we are beloved—the firstborn of God. Our very being reflects the sacred. The incarnation of God in human flesh is proof.

Christmas Day – Surprisingly Sacred

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of the messenger who announces peace, who brings good news, who announces salvation, who says to Zion, “Your God reigns.” - Isaiah 52: 7-10 (Proper III)

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people.” - John 1: 1-14

In the early church, Sunday was known as the “day of light.” And so it is special when Christmas falls on a Sunday, as it does in 2022. As light dawns on this morning, as the children scramble to the tree to see what has appeared, we remember that the sacred comes in the form of surprise sometimes, just as it did when light and life was known anew in the form of a baby in a humble stable. Can we dare to believe that we can know a surprising calm even in the midst of anxiety because of the in-breaking of this Prince of Peace upon our lives each and every day?

Sunday after Christmas – Sacred Doing

“I will recount the gracious deeds of the LORD, the praiseworthy acts of the LORD, because of all that the LORD has done for us, and the great favor to the house of Israel that he has shown them according to his mercy, according to the abundance of his steadfast love.” - Isaiah 63: 7-9

Then Joseph got up, took the child and his mother by night, and went to Egypt, and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what had been spoken by the Lord through the prophet, “Out of Egypt I have called my son... A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more.” - Matthew 2: 13-23

We’ve looked through the lens of the sacred and have experienced time, people, places, others, and ourselves as God’s holy love reflected and incarnate in the world. Because of the experience of God’s action of love toward us, we are called also to act, the “sacred doing” of alleviating suffering wherever it is found. We dedicate ourselves in this New Year to sacred acts of justice and mercy, bringing grace to a hurting world, reflecting the sacred in all we do.