

# LIVING LITURGY™

for Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion

Year A • 2020

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*Presented to*

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*in grateful appreciation  
for ministering as an  
Extraordinary Minister  
of  
Holy Communion*

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*(date)*

## **USING THIS RESOURCE**

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Extraordinary typically refers to outstanding or exceptional. But extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are “extraordinary” in the sense of “in addition to” the ordinary (as well as being outstanding and exceptional!). Ordinary ministers of Holy Communion are the ordained and those properly installed as acolytes, usually seminarians. In parishes today there are simply not enough “ordinary” ministers of Holy Communion, so we call forth additional ministers, referred to as “extraordinary.” Imagine how long the distribution of Communion would take if only the ordained or seminarians were those who distributed! It is not only because of need, however, that we have extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. It is also by virtue of one’s baptism. We parishioners are grateful that so many baptized Christians respond to the call to serve as extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion. In so doing we are reminded that we are all holy, and we are all called to ministry by virtue of our Christian baptism.

### ***Preparing for This Ministry***

Though different dioceses and parishes have slightly different preparation requirements for those who would be extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, there is preparation nonetheless. We hope that this book will be a source of reflection for such preparation, and also for ongoing reflection throughout one’s ministry. We know that it is not enough to simply attend a training event and never look back. Each ministry of the church requires regular prayer, reflection, reading, and thoughtfulness. This book is intended to assist with that process by providing prayers and reflection for each Sunday and for certain solemnities. This resource can also be used by groups who would like to share their faith with questions that prompt discussion.

### ***Holy Communion for the Homebound and Sick***

In the New Testament Letter of James we learn about the concern and care that the early Christians had for those members of their community who were sick. Such care and concern was a hallmark of Jesus’ own ministry, and it has been a Christian charism ever since. Each week there are parishioners who are not able to join us

for the liturgy, and so the Eucharist is brought to them as a sign of our unity. Extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion are often those who perform this ministry, and, in so doing, they extend the parish's reach to so many more fellow parishioners. This book is intended to be a resource for them as well.

***Adapting This Resource for Holy Communion for the Homebound and Sick***

The Communion rite (Ordinary Rite of Communion of the Sick) is provided as a separate publication to this book and enclosed within. Those who are extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion have undoubtedly been made familiar with this rite as part of their preparation. This book may be adapted for use with the rite, by sharing the gospel reflection, the prayers, or even the reflection question, so that the visit becomes a true ministry. It is to be remembered that ministers are not mere functionaries. As such, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion bring not only the presence of Christ in the eucharistic species, but the presence of Christ in their very person by virtue of their baptism. So this book has been designed with that in mind, and it can be used to assist with making this a meaningful encounter and ministry.



On this First Sunday of Advent we come before the Lord with hopeful hearts and joyful spirits, and ask him to once again send his light to illuminate the darkness in our lives . . .

### **Prayer**

God of new beginnings,  
we give thanks that we may stand within your gates  
and rejoice in your holy temple.  
May your peace dwell with us always.  
Show us, Lord, your love,  
*and grant us your salvation. Amen.*

### **Gospel**

**Matt 24:37-44**

Jesus said to his disciples: "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. In those days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day that Noah entered the ark. They did not know until the flood came and carried them all away. So will it be also at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be out in the field; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken, and one will be left. Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come. Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour of night when the thief was coming, he would have stayed awake and not let his house be broken into. So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

### **Brief Silence**

**For Reflection**

“Stay awake!” These words in the Gospel of Matthew today strike us to the core as we begin the Advent season. These words also foreshadow the disciples’ struggle during the agony in the garden. The call to stay awake presumes that we might be dozing off, idling our time away. Disciples must be ready at all times without resorting to a false sense of security.

Jesus tells his audience that as it was in the time of Noah, so shall it be at the coming of the Lord. In Noah’s day, human beings went steadily on their way, unaware and apparently unconcerned that something larger was at work. Yet, “the flood came and carried them all away.” Jesus tells his listeners that the Son of Man will come when we do not expect it. These words were written for Matthew’s community, which might have grown complacent during the intervening decades between Jesus’ time on earth and the composition of the gospel. But these same words are for us, even two thousand years later. Rather than expecting a cataclysmic event like the flood of Noah or something apocalyptic, we might consider our own death, which may come when we least expect it.

◆ In the gospel Jesus urges the disciples to “stay awake! / For you do not know on which day your Lord will come.” What is Jesus calling you to “wake up” to this Advent?

**Brief Silence****Prayer**

Lord God, you sent your Son as light for the world. May we be watchful for that same light as we anticipate his coming, mindful of the signs that he is near. Let us not grow weary but instead be ever vigilant. We ask this in his name, for he is the dawn that breaks from on high. **Amen.**



In today's gospel John the Baptist tells us, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" For the times we have not lived lives worthy of God's kingdom of justice and peace, let us ask for forgiveness . . .

### Prayer

God of all nations, you chose John the Baptist to be your voice in the desert.

May our voices join with his to announce that your salvation is near. Justice shall flourish in his time, and fullness of peace forever. **Amen.**

### Gospel

**Matt 3:1-12**

John the Baptist appeared, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" It was of him that the prophet Isaiah had spoken when he said: / *A voice of one crying out in the desert, / Prepare the way of the Lord, / make straight his paths.* / John wore clothing made of camel's hair and had a leather belt around his waist. His food was locusts and wild honey. At that time Jerusalem, all Judea, and the whole region around the Jordan were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins.

When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce good fruit as evidence of your repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I tell you, God can raise up children to Abraham from these stones. Even now the ax lies at the root of the trees. Therefore every tree that does not bear good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. I am baptizing you with water, for repentance, but the one who is coming after me is

mightier than I. I am not worthy to carry his sandals. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in his hand. He will clear his threshing floor and gather his wheat into his barn, but the chaff he will burn with unquenchable fire.”

**Brief Silence**

**For Reflection**

Though today is December 8 when we might expect the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, it happens to fall on a Sunday. Therefore, the Second Sunday of Advent is what we celebrate today. We will commemorate the Immaculate Conception tomorrow. And for this Advent Sunday we hear the fiery preaching of John the Baptist, introduced for the first time in the Gospel of Matthew.

Because John the Baptist is considered a Christian saint, it's sometimes possible to overlook that historically he was a Jewish prophet calling the Jewish people to repentance, as prophets had done for centuries before. He directly confronts the Pharisees and Sadducees, name-calling them a “brood of vipers.” They are not to rest assured in their being part of the chosen people of God, the children of Abraham. For God can raise up children of Abraham from the stones. This message is so stark it nearly needs to be recast to our own day for those of us who might feel secure in our Christian or Catholic identity. We can hear John telling us that God can make Christians from the stones. There is no inherent value or guarantee of salvation simply by being Christian. John would say something more is demanded. We are to repent, for the kingdom is at hand.

◆ John the Baptist tells us, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!” Rather than rest secure in our Christian identity, from what do we need to repent?

**Brief Silence**

**Prayer**

Lord God Almighty, you sent John the Baptist to call your people to repentance. May we heed that same message, speaking to us through the ages. Grant us the courage to turn away from all that keeps us from you, so that we may embrace the Kingdom of Heaven. **Amen.**