

Dear Padre,

Is Advent a penitential season?

Strictly speaking, the penitential times in the Church are “every Friday of the whole year and the season of Lent” (*Code of Canon Law*, 1250). Advent is a time to prepare for Christmas when Christ’s First Coming is remembered, and this remembrance directs the mind and heart to await Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. (See *Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the General Roman Calendar*, 39.) While Advent is more anticipatory than penitential, the US Conference of Catholic Bishops states, “Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.” Although, historically, Advent was similar to Lent as a forty-day period of prayer and fasting, it was less severe than the season preceding Easter, and it lacked uniformity in the Western Church. The Eastern Church still begins the Nativity Fast on November 15, while in the Western Church, Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas.

Regardless, the significant focus of Advent is our Lord’s coming (*adventus* in Latin). The Church reflects this anticipation of Advent through such practices as limiting floral arrangements in the sanctuary, simpler liturgical music, and omitting the Gloria at Mass until Christmas. We can also reflect the anticipation of Advent through such spiritual practices as participation in works of charity, moderation in shopping, celebration of the sacrament of penance, fasting on Fridays, and prayerful contemplation on our Savior’s Incarnation. ●

Fr. Byron Miller, CSsR / DearPadre.org



Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
December 1	December 2	December 3	December 4	December 5	December 6	December 7
Advent	Advent	St. Francis	Advent	Advent	Advent	Second Sunday of Advent
Weekday	Weekday	Xavier, Priest	Weekday	Weekday	Weekday	
Is 4:2–6	Is 11:1–10	Is 25:6–10a	Is 26:1–6	Is 29:17–24	Is 30:19–21, 23–26	Is 11:1–10
Mt 8:5–11	Lk 10:21–24	Mt 15:29–37	Mt 7:21, 24–27	Mt 9:27–31	Mt 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6–8	Rom 15:4–9
						Mt 3:1–12



A WORD FROM POPE LEO XIV

We are called to offer God’s love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people. Brothers and sisters, this is the hour for love! The heart of the gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters.

HOMILY, ROME, MAY 18, 2025



Waiting, but Quick!

MIGUEL DULICK

This is the first Sunday of Advent, and the excitement is palpable. Writing 800 years before Christ, the prophet Isaiah sounds like breaking news: “They shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks.” The psalmist announces we are already there: “And now we have set foot within your gates, O Jerusalem.” Saint Paul tickles our fancy with another whole round of “revelation” yet to come “on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Only Jesus himself seems a little cautious: “Be watchful! Be alert!” The Lord “is coming,” but he’s not here yet. Leave it to Jesus to force the paradox for which Advent seems to have been created: Jesus is present, but we dare not “sleep,” lest we miss him!

How do we wait for Christmas? After Halloween, the Christmas lights go up, the carols start, the “Merry Christmas!” / “Happy Holidays!” debate begins. Lent is a time for repentance, alms, and fasting. But there’s no fasting in Advent: we fill bags with gifts and stockings with goodies. The Church tries to slow us down and encourage a little reflecting to prepare the way, led by John the Baptist. So let’s keep waiting; let’s hold on to our peace. Christmas Eve will be here soon enough. But let’s not be too austere. A full menu of holiday parties and concerts and family feasts can legitimately “anticipate” Christmas. Let’s cheer each other: Merry Advent! ●



SCAN TO
LEARN ABOUT
AUTHOR
MIGUEL
DULICK

Reflect

What can I do to prepare for Christmas mindfully, peacefully, and joyfully?



Our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed; the night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light.

ROMANS 13:11B–12



Comments from Father David Paintsil:

A Reflection on Advent and Its Significance

I would like to begin by expressing my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for your prayers, gifts, and kind wishes on my birthday. Your thoughtfulness and generosity truly touched me. I felt deeply appreciated and surrounded by genuine care. Thank you all for making the day so beautiful.

Advent ushers us into a new liturgical season of the church. The feast of Christ the King, which we celebrated last week, marked the end of the liturgical year, and with Advent, we begin the new year of the Church. Advent is a time of joyful expectation and preparation towards the second coming of Christ at the end of time and the celebration of his birth at Christmas. The readings and the liturgy from the first Sunday of Advent to December 16th focus on the second and final coming of Christ, while the second part, from December 17th to 24th, prepares us for Christmas.

There are a few changes in our liturgy; for example, the liturgical color for this season is purple, signifying a time of preparation and penance. We don't sing the Gloria, which also means we are in a time of waiting. We have the Advent wreath and candles. The wreath is a reminder of the hope and joy coming. The four candles represent the four weeks of Advent. The purple candles symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices that must be undertaken. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, which is Gaudete Sunday or rejoicing Sunday.

Advent is a sacred season of longing, vigilance, and joyful expectation. It invites us to slow down and enter a spiritual posture that is often countercultural in a fast-paced world. Rather than rushing toward Christmas, the Church calls us to wait—actively, intentionally, and prayerfully. Advent reminds us that God's coming is not merely a historical event of the past or a festive moment of the present; it is an ongoing visitation. Christ comes to us daily—in the sacraments, in Scripture, in the silence of prayer, and in the people we encounter. Advent teaches us to sharpen our spiritual vision so that we may recognize these daily epiphanies of grace.

At its heart, Advent is about hope. It acknowledges that our world is wounded, our hearts imperfect, and our lives unfinished. Yet it proclaims that God enters precisely into that incompleteness. This holy season also challenges us to prepare. John the Baptist's cry, "Prepare the way of the Lord," calls us not only to spiritual readiness but also to moral renewal. Advent preparation is not simply decorating our homes but cleansing our hearts—through reconciliation, acts of charity, and a renewed commitment to prayer. It is a time to reorder our desires, to let go of distractions, and to make space for Christ to dwell more fully.

Ultimately, Advent points us toward both the crib and the kingdom. We look back to Christ's humble birth in Bethlehem and forward to His glorious return. Living between these two comings shapes our Christian identity: we are a people who wait in hope, who watch with trust, and who work for God's kingdom in the present moment. Advent, therefore, is not merely a liturgical season but a spiritual attitude—a way of living with hearts attuned to God's presence and promises. May Our Blessed Mother Mary intercede for us during this holy season.

"We at St. Mary & Joseph Parishes strive for a deeper encounter with Jesus Christ through Scripture and Sacraments, form missionary disciples, and send them forth to transform the world."



Our Three-Parish Cluster
Sts. Mary and Joseph Catholic Churches
Lone Tree, Nichols and Hills

First Sunday of Advent

November 30, 2025

Church of St. Mary, 201 Short Street, Box B, Nichols, Iowa, 52766 319-330-5324
St. Mary Church, 216 West Jayne Street, Box 416, Lone Tree, Iowa, 52755 319-629-4225
St. Joseph Church, 209 Brady Street, PO Box 187, Hills, Iowa, 52235 319-679-2271

Sts. Mary and Joseph Cluster Parish Office
209 Brady Street, P.O. Box 187 Hills, Iowa 52235-0187

Father David Paintsil, Pastor; 319-679-2271; email: paintsild@diodav.org
Mrs. Carol Kaalberg, Pastoral Associate; 319-330-5324; email: kaalbergc@diodav.org
Lora Sieverding, Administrative Assistant & Bookkeeper; hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org
Nancy Waldschmidt, Director of Faith Formation; 319-331-2077; email: nwaldschmidt@gwaea.org
Cluster Website: stsmariyoseph.com Cluster Facebook: www.facebook.com/stsmariyandjoseph
Rev. Lou Leonhardt (retired priest); PO Box 454, Lone Tree, IA 52755 319-629-4339
Bulletin deadline: 10am Tuesday. Contact Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324 or Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560
Hills Church entry: Lora Sieverding, 319-530-5560 or Judy Stebral, 319-331-8727

Music Ministry: St. Joseph, Hills: Lily Westemeyer, Robynn Anderson.
Church of St. Mary, Nichols: Jean Mengel and Rhonda Meredith
St. Mary, Lone Tree: Steve Moore.
St. Joseph Prayer Line: Lucille Duwa 679-2404; Joan Gringer 679-2406
Church of St. Mary, Nichols Prayer Line: Carol Kaalberg, 319-330-5324
St. Mary, Lone Tree Prayer Line: Nancy Ford, 319-430-0882

Cluster Mass Intentions November 29 to December 7, 2025

Saturday	November 29	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Gayle Kaalberg
Sunday	November 30	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Gayle Kaalberg Dean & Alice Cole
Monday	December 1	8:00 AM	Lone Tree R	Lida Bekker
Tuesday	December 2	8:00 AM 8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium PP CC	Rosella Attig Corinne Murphy Cluster Parishioners
Wednesday	December 3	8:00 AM 8:30 AM	Lone Tree R Atrium	Harry Attig Shirley Streb
Thursday	December 4	8:30 AM 10:00 AM	Atrium PPCC	Ellen Coan Darlene Sieren
Friday	December 5	8:30 AM	Atrium	Patricia Greubel
Saturday	December 6	4:00 PM	Lone Tree	Norma & Luther Hartley
Sunday	December 7	8:00 AM 10:00 AM	Nichols Hills	Gayle Kaalberg Ellen Coan

Atrium , Atrium Village Chapel,
Atrium Village, Hills.

PP CC, Pioneer Park Care Center
located at Pioneer Park Villa,
Lone Tree.

Lone Tree R, St. Mary Rectory in
Lone Tree.

Confession Schedule

*Father David is available to
hear confessions before
Mass at these times:*

St. Mary, Lone Tree

Saturday 3:30 to 3:50 pm

Church of St. Mary Nichols

Sunday 7:30 to 7:50 am

St. Joseph, Hills

Sunday 9:30 to 9:50 am

*Let us come to reconcile to God
and others!*

Bible Study

Bible Study will meet December 9 & December 23 at Atrium Village, 2nd floor study/lounge at 6:30 PM. Contact Melody Hobert-Mellecker—319-936-3287, call or text — if you are interested, or just come!



The 25-26 Annual Diocesan Appeal

Parish Goals:

Hills = \$11,405.00 ... Pledged to date, \$10,045 (88.1% of goal).

Lone Tree = \$10, 670.00 ... Pledged to date, \$10,165 (95.3% of goal).

Nichols= \$8,114.00 ... Pledged to date, \$8,487 (104.6% of goal).



ST. MARY LONE TREE

From Thanksgiving through Advent, we will be collecting baby items for Birthright of Johnson County. This year, Birthright especially needs larger diapers (sizes 3 & 4), wipes, and baby shampoo and lotion. Sleepers and hooded towels are also in low supply. All items donated will be given to support expecting and new mothers.



RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The Children's missals in the back of each church will match up with the new adult missals starting November 30th. Please encourage your child to follow along.

Blue Christmas Service
An Ecumenical Service in remembrance of those who have gone before us during this past year.
Sunday, December 7
2:00 PM
Presbyterian Church, Lone Tree

LONE TREE & NICHOLS FOOD PANTRY

During November & The Season of Advent, we will be collecting food items and non-perishables for our local food pantry. The need is increasing so we are asking for your help. Baskets are at both church entrances for your donations.



Liturgical Ministers—Lone Tree St. Mary Saturday 4:00 pm Cycle A Reading

	11/29/2025 Fr. David	12/06/2025 Fr. Lou	12/13/2025 Fr. David	12/20/2025 Fr. Lou	Lone Tree	Parish Support
Greeter	Virginia Schlapkohl	Carter Parrish	Nancy Ford	Bernie Lorack	Envelopes	\$743.00
Lector	Sherry Nicola	Landon Parrish	Jerry Ford	Jill Welter	Offertory	\$51.00
Cross Bearer	Jerry Ford	Logan Parrish	Nancy Ford	Lynn Bland	ACH	\$215.00
Servers	Sherry Nicola	Trudi Westfall/Maggie Anderson	Jerry Ford	Jill Welter		
Eucharist	Nancy Ford	Sherry Nicola	Jerry Ford	Sherry Nicola		
Eucharist	Sherry Nicola	Trudi Westfall	Nancy Ford	Judy Grothe		
Collection	Jerry Ford	Dani Parrish	Glen Gerot	Joan Davis		
	Nancy Ford	Carter Parrish	Betty Gerot	Lynn Bland		
Gifts	Jerry & Nancy Ford	Dani & Carter Parrish	Betty, Glen Gerot	Joan Davis, Lynn Bland		
Commentator	Sherry Nicola	Trudi Westfall	Jerry Ford	Jill Welter		

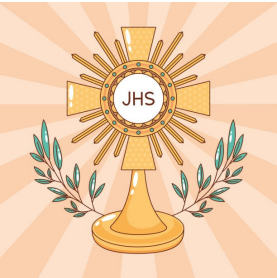
Liturgical Ministers—Nichols Church of St. Mary Sunday 8:00 am Cycle A Reading

	11/30/2025 Fr. Lou	12/07/2025 Fr. David	12/14/2025 Fr. Lou	12/21/2025 Fr. David	Nichols	Parish Support
Greeter	Bruce & Margaret Matt	Joe Harper	Joe Harper	Joe Harper	Envelopes	\$550.00
Lector	Carol Kaalberg	Missy Lenz	Renetta Burlage	Missy Lenz	Offertory	\$55.00
Cross Bearer	Dennis Truesdale	Adam Gauger	Michael Burlage	Michael Burlage	ACH	\$250.00
Server	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Funeral Stole Fee	\$50.00
Eucharist	Missy Lenz	Adam Gauger	Missy Lenz	Missy Lenz	Fuel	\$20.00
Eucharist	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Peter's Pence	\$10.00
Collection	Adam Gauger	David Ollendick	Joe Harper	Dennis Truesdale	Works of Charity	\$10.00
	Kory Kaalberg	Joe Harper	Dennis Truesdale	Adam Gauger		
Gifts	Rose & Joe Harper	Kory & Chris Kaalberg	Missy Lenz	Julia Elder		
Commentator	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg	Carol Kaalberg		

Liturgical Ministers—Hills St. Joseph Sunday 10:00 am Cycle A Reading

	11/30/2025 Fr. David	12/07/2025 Fr. David	12/14/2025 Fr. David	12/21/2025 Fr. David	Hills	Parish Support
Music Ministry	Choir & Lily Westemyer	Robynn Anderson	Lily Westemyer	Lily Westemyer	Envelopes	\$180.00
Greeter	Jim & Hope Frantz	Judy Stebral	Marcia Mellecker	Gus & Lenore Manrique	Offertory	\$148.00
Lector	Bob Jenn	Kay Evans	Kay Evans	Wendy Berry	CCHD	\$70.00
				Mike Sieverding/		
Server	Mike Sieverding	Jean Burr/Messi Akodegnon	Emy Rivera/Wendy Berry	Messi Akodegnon	ACH	\$535.00
Eucharist -host	Jolene Van Eschan	Jolene Van Eschan	Jolene Van Eschan	Kristee Malmberg		
Eucharist - cup	Deanne Eden	Arlene Johnston	Arlene Johnston	Emi Rivera		
Eucharist - cup	Emy Rivera	Bob Jenn	Mike Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick		
Collection	Jim Frantz	Mike Sieverding	Thom Kirkpatrick	Jim Frantz		
	Hope Frantz	Lora Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick	Hope Frantz		
Gifts	Family of Dean & Alice Cole	Family of Ellen Coan	Family of Connie Dietsch	Family of Dean & Alice Cole		
Commentator	Lora Sieverding	Lora Sieverding	Carol Kirkpatrick	Carol Kirkpatrick		

If you are unavailable for the above ministry assignment, please find your own replacement. Thank you.



Eucharistic Adoration every Wednesday 6 PM—7 PM St. Joseph, Hills

Cluster Parish Announcements

Bulletin deadline Tuesday at 10:00 am. Contact Lora Sieverding at 319-530-5560, hillsstjosephfin@diodav.org or Carol Kaalberg at 319-330-5324 or kaalbergc@diodav.org.

St. Joseph Church, Hills.

St. Joseph Food Pantry is open each Wednesday morning from 10 am to noon. Mike and Lucy Parker direct our food pantry and can be reached at 319-679-2420.

Hills Parish Council: Next meeting: January 19, 6:30 PM.

Parishioners are welcome to attend council meetings. Please see a council member if you have agenda items. Members include: Rick Cole, Kay Evans, Karen Karr, Thom Kirkpatrick, Kristee Malmberg, Shelagh McDonald, Brian Moran, and Jim Schneider (President). Minutes are at church entry.

Rest in Peace: Our parish sympathy is extended to the family of John Schneider, who passed away last week. John is the son of Vernita Schneider and brother to Jim Schneider. Eternal rest grant unto him O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him. May his soul and all the souls of the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.



THANK YOU to Hills Bank & Trust for donating roughly 200 pounds of food to our food pantry. Our food pantry also received an anonymous donation of \$100 and a \$50 gift card to Hy-Vee. Additionally, Marsha Mellecker donated 25 half gallon containers of milk to the pantry.

Food pantries are in need of milk and canned FRUIT. During giving season it is nice to keep our local food pantries in mind and help them help those in need.



Feast of Immaculate Conception
Cluster Mass
Monday, December 8
St. Joseph Hills at 6:30 PM



Thank you everyone for your thoughts and prayers from across the world, and thank you for all the food and support in the care packages. They were all a big help during the shutdown and a moral boost! We are all so grateful to be backed by such amazing and wonderful people. Can't wait to be back state side and celebrate Mass with you! Thank you!

Matt Waldschmidt

Healing Mass
December 6, at St. Joseph, Hills
9:00 AM Confession
9:30 AM Rosary
10:00 AM Healing Mass
Hospitality to follow,
provided by St. Mary, of Nichols.

No Healing Mass in January

St. Mary Church, Lone Tree and Nichols

Lone Tree Food Pantry is open each Wednesday afternoon from 3:30-5:00 PM. For more information, please call 319-629-4900.

Nichols Parish Council & Finance Council: Next meeting will be Sunday, January 25, following Mass at the church.

Lone Tree Parish Council: Next meeting will be Monday, January 26 at 6:00 PM, NOTE: this is a new date and time.



Thanksgiving Sharing Meal was held Sunday, November 16 at the Saint Mary Parish Hall in Nichols. 74 meals were served and enjoyed. "A Guy and a Grill" catered the meal at a cost of \$15 per meal. Committee members solicited monetary donations to help with this expense. A big thank you to all who donated! Food items and non perishables, as well as cash donation were received at the door that day and were gifted to our local food pantries. \$200 was gifted to West Liberty Food Pantry and \$200 was gifted to Lone Tree/Nichols Food Pantry. In addition, the Church of Saint Mary received \$1,000 which was gifted to the Lone Tree/Nichols Food Pantry. Jesus says, "Feed my people," and the three churches of Nichols (United Methodist, Nichols Christian and St. Mary's Catholic) cooperated and accomplished this mission.



SECRET SANTA

During Advent, St. Mary Lone Tree will be collecting for our SECRET SANTA project. Please be generous! During our Ecumenical Thanksgiving Service \$251.00 was donated to SECRET SANTA!



St. Mary Lone Tree Hospitality



St. Mary Lone Tree hosted their hospitality Taco Supper, Saturday, November 15, following Mass. Thank you to Lone Tree Parish & Finance Council who planned this wonderful meal, and thank you to all who enjoyed food and fellowship with us.