



## Saint Elizabeth of Hungary Roman Catholic Church

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Office hours Tuesday to Friday 9 to 3.

English masses: Monday to Saturday at 7.30 in the morning  
Sunday's 12 o'clock mass is both in English and Hungarian

Jesuit priests: Szabolcs Sajgó (pastor), László Marosfalvy – retired: Balázs Jaschkó, József Fülöp

# CHURCH BULLETIN

Number 49 – Second Sunday of Advent – December 7, 2008

Sunday, December 7.

Readings: Is 40.1-5,9-11; 2 Pt 3.8-14; Mk 1.1-8

Responsorial Psalm: „Show us your steadfast love,  
O Lord, and grant us your salvation.”

### PRAYER INTENTIONS:

- 9:00** ☩ +édesanyjáért – Kristóf Jutka  
☩ +Kocsis szülőkért – fiuk és családja  
☩ +Lecsek szülőkért – fiuk és családja  
☩ +Varga Eszterért - családja
- 10:30** ☩ Joe Trentadve felgyógyulásáért – Radocsay cs.  
☩ Kenéz Mihály felgyógyulásáért - Erzsi  
☩ 53. házassági évfordulóra, hálaból – Marika és László  
☩ élő és elhunyt Szendi és Szervo családtagokért  
☩ +Magyar Gyuláért – felesége, Mária  
☩ +szeretteiért – Sepa Erzsébet és Ilona  
☩ +édesanyjáért – Bonnay Erzsébet  
☩ +Kovács Lászlóért - családja  
☩ +Molnár Erzsébetért és +Edna Josephért – cs.
- ☩ +Harangozó szülőkért és +testvérekért – Horváth cs.  
☩ +barátokért és +rokonokért – Farkas Sándor és Teréz  
☩ +Varga Eszterért – Szendi család, Szakál család és Bonnay László és Katalin  
☩ +Meszesán Mihályért - családja  
☩ +Kuhár Józsefnéért – leánya és unokái  
☩ +Szele Lászlóért – Kocsis József és családja  
☩ +Miricz Imréért – felesége, Gabriella  
☩ +Filipovits Józsefért – Fehér család
- 12:00** +férjéért, Husár Edéért – Júlia

### Monday, Dec. 8; Immaculate Conception of Mary

- 7.30 for the homeless  
8.00 (1) +Lőrincért – testvérei  
(2) +Rajnyák Máriaért – Csányi Margit  
19.00 bérmálkozóinkért

### Tuesday, December 9; Juan Diego

- 7.30 for the intention of the Jesuit General  
8.00 Pálért – Etelka  
19.00 cursillosainkért

### Wednesday, December 10;

- 7.30 for our deceased Jesuits  
8.00 elhunyt magyar jezsuitákért  
19.00 az egyházközség lelki megújulásáért

### Thursday, December 11; Damasus I, pope

- 7.30 for Jesuit vocations  
8.00 jezsuita hivatásokért

### Friday, Dec. 12; Our Lady of Guadalupe

- 7.30 for father's intention  
8.00 atyák szándékaira  
19.00 a magyar Pax Romanaért

### Saturday, December 13; Lucy

- 7.30 for father's intention  
8.00 +Szepesi Margitért – leánya és családja

**Funeral:** Imre Koroknay (88)

## Unmasking Sin

Fr. Phil Bloom

This Friday is the opening of the movie: *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*. I am looking forward to seeing it with the fourth graders of our parish school. This homily is not a promotion for the movie, but I mention it because of something which happened in the lead-up to its release. I bring it up because it will help us understand what is meant the “forgiveness of sin” which John speaks about in today's Gospel.

The *New York Times* did an article about C.S. Lewis (author of the *Chronicles of Narnia*) which was quite critical of the man. Rather than focusing on Lewis' ideas and stories, the reporter chose to pass on rumours regarding his personal life. That was to be expected considering the state of journalism today. What bothered me more than article, however, was the way some C.S. Lewis' fans tried to defend him. Their attempts to defend Lewis were like “friendly fire.” Although they had good intentions, their lack of attentiveness caused them to damage their own side, rather than hitting the real target.

The C.S. Lewis defenders undercut the Christian message in two fundamental ways. First, they asserted that even if the rumours are really true, they do not matter because they described things which happened when Lewis was a young man, before his conversion to Christianity. Lewis himself explicitly rejects this line of defence. In one of his books (*Problem of Pain*) he points out: “We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. But mere time does

nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of a sin.” That a sin took place a long time ago does not change the reality of the misdeed, although it might make it easier for a person to acknowledge it and to repent. Unfortunately the passage of time often has the opposite effect. It can make a person less likely to recognize the damage. “Well, I was young and foolish then. Just sowing a few wild oats, you know.” The defenders of C.S. Lewis may unwittingly encourage that cavalier approach to sin.

The bigger problem was in the defenders’ second line of defence. Some of them simply asserted that the sins mentioned were in themselves no big deal. “So what?” They asked, “We all make mistakes. We are all weak.” Lewis would have reacted strongly to this implicit denial of sin. Anyone who has read his books knows that the last thing you can accuse him of is a casual attitude toward sin. In fact, one of his great contributions is unmasking sin for what it is. He knew that before people could receive the Good News of forgiveness, they had to know what sin actually is. The diagnosis comes before the cure.

Back in John the Baptist’s day, people – pagans, as well as Jews – knew that they had violated divine laws. Today people are not so sure that right and wrong exist or that human beings are even responsible for their actions.\* “Sin” is like a foreign word to people of our culture. It has no meaning beyond “something that some people think is bad.” It needs to be retranslated. C.S. Lewis tried to do that. In one of his writings (*Letters to Malcolm*) he said: “Every sin is the distortion of an energy breathed into us...” By even the smallest sin “we poison the wine as He decants it into us; murder a melody He would play with us as the instrument...Hence all sin, whatever else it is, is sacrilege.”

C.S. Lewis did not write much about sensational sins like murder or adultery or drunkenness. Rather he concentrated on more everyday failings such as tale bearing, ill temper, sloth and cowardice. He shows how seemingly small matters can have great consequences, separating a person from other human beings and ultimately God himself.

Lewis wrote as a man painfully aware of his own past sins and his present sinfulness. After his conversion, it took him a few years to muster the courage to make an auricular confession to an Anglican priest. About his first confession, he wrote (on October 24, 1940), “It was the hardest decision I have ever made.” From that time on he made regular confession to a priest.

He of course was aware of the danger of scrupulosity. He corresponded with a lady who was something of a hypochondriac, spiritually as well as physically. Warning her against anxiety about what a lost soul she is, he told her to just get down to brass tacks: What have you actually done? Just the facts, please. Take those things to a wise priest – and listen to what he has to say.\*\* Then, be at peace, knowing that God forgives even your most miserable sins.

That was the attitude of St. John the Baptist when people came to him in the desert. He told them to turn away from their misdeeds and they would be forgiven. Before washing them in the Jordan, the people “acknowledged their sins.” In doing so they prepared themselves for one mightier than John who would give them the definitive baptism – in the Holy Spirit. This Advent we also desire to turn from sin and receive the Saviour who John proclaimed.

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\*Pope John Paul II tackled this issue in *Veritatis Splendor*, arguably his most important encyclical. He argues that our modern culture has fallen into two errors regarding human freedom: The first is to deny we are free, that is, responsible for our actions. The second is to say that we are so free we can change the moral law any way we wish. John Paul the Great obviously expressed it better than I can. If you read only one papal document, I recommend *Veritatis Splendor*. Here is a quote worth meditating on:

*Certain currents of modern thought have gone so far as to exalt freedom to such an extent that it becomes an absolute, which would then be the source of values. This is the direction taken by doctrines which have lost the sense of the transcendent or which are explicitly atheist. The individual conscience is accorded the status of a supreme tribunal of moral judgment which hands down categorical and infallible decisions about good and evil...*

Side by side with its exaltation of freedom, yet oddly in contrast with it, modern culture radically questions the very existence of this freedom. A number of disciplines, grouped under the name of the "behavioural sciences", have rightly drawn attention to the many kinds of psychological and social conditioning which influence the exercise of human freedom. Knowledge of these conditionings and the study they have received represent important achievements which have found application in various areas, for example in pedagogy or the administration of justice. But some people, going beyond the conclusions which can be legitimately drawn from these observations, have come to question or even deny the very reality of human freedom.

\*\*And if you can't find one, try me - or someone like me. We may not have tons of sage advice, but we will at least listen and give absolution with a penance - and perhaps help you get your focus back on God. Here is some sound advice from C.S. Lewis:

1. Remember what St. John says “If our heart condemns us, God is stronger than our heart.” *The feeling of being, or not being forgiven and love, is not what matters. One must come down to brass tacks. If there is a particular sin on your conscience, repent and confess it. If there isn't, tell the despondent devil not to be silly. You can't help hearing this voice (the odious inner radio) but you must treat it merely like a buzzing in your ears or any other irrational nuisance.*

2. Remember the story in the *Imitation*, how Christ on the crucifix suddenly spoke to the monk who was so anxious about his salvation and said, “If you know that all was well, what would you, today, do or stop doing?” *When you have found the answer, do it or stop doing it. You see, one must always get back to the practical and definite. What the devil loves is that vague cloud of unspecified guilt feeling or unspecified virtue by which he lures us into despair or presumption. “Detail, please?” is the answer.*

3. The sense of dereliction cannot be a bad symptom for Our Lord Himself experienced it in its depth – “Why hast thou forsaken me?”