



We wait for Christ

AN ADVENT RESOURCE FOR
YOUNG PEOPLE

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Advent

is the time where we as Christians begin our preparation for the long awaited Messiah, Jesus the Christ whose birth we celebrate at Christmas. Advent is also the beginning of the new liturgical year. It is a time of waiting, preparation and new beginnings.

Baby Jesus

Of all the ways to bring us a Messiah, who could have expected that God, who can do anything, would choose to deliver him in the form of a tiny, helpless baby to a humble family? This is not what was expected by the Jews, nor would it be expected today. We must therefore ask ourselves, what is God trying to teach us? We begin to see the importance God places on humility, peace and love. To be a follower of God, we do not need to be strong or powerful but to imitate a tiny baby.

Waiting

In our society of instant *everything*, the concept of waiting for anything is seen as a nuisance and often is undervalued. Yet there will always be things that we need to wait for, and things that are worth waiting for. For many, the birth of a child is a very real reminder of how we need to wait. Children know very well about waiting and often need help being patient. The phrase "Are we there yet?" expresses the impatience we sometimes feel when something we look forward to is approaching. God's time is eternal, which means that when He's involved, there can be a lot of waiting!

A photograph of a grey rectangular sign with the word "RESERVED" in bold, black, sans-serif capital letters. The sign is placed on a light-colored table. To the right of the sign, a white ceramic plate is partially visible. The background is slightly blurred, showing what appears to be a white tablecloth and some greenery.

RESERVED

Anticipation

In Advent we join with Mary who awaited the birth of her child. We also join with all the people of the Old Testament who awaited the Messiah and indeed the whole of creation which as St Paul puts it, has been “groaning in labour pains” (Romans 8:22) to be set free. Advent allows us to participate in the waiting that is part of life. It is an exciting time and full of anticipation and hope.

Preparation

Why are we given this time of waiting? We need to use all of this time we have been given to help us prepare for Christmas. We know the ways in which the secular world tells us to prepare: Shopping for gifts, cooking, Christmas Cards, Christmas Parties, and Holidays. It is important to also prepare for Christmas in our hearts. From experience, we know that the more we prepare ourselves for something, the more we get out of it. What are the ways in which we can prepare for Christmas? Whatever way you choose, it will certainly involve taking some time out of the busyness of the world to reflect on what this time can be used for.

New beginnings

With the birth of a new child comes many new beginnings for a family. Advent is also the beginning of the new liturgical year. Therefore we can also use this as an opportunity to make a fresh start in our faith journey. What things do I feel called to change about my life? What should I be doing more of, less of? Advent can be a time for resolutions – after all, it is the New Year!



This resource was created for Advent 2013 to assist young people, both individually and in youth groups to enter more deeply into the season of Advent.

The resource contains the Gospel readings and reflection questions for each day of Advent. Each Sunday also includes some prayers that can be used either in Mass or during a group prayer time. In addition, there are some other sections that people may find interesting or useful in helping them prepare for Christmas.

USING THE RESOURCE FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION

Some ideas to consider:

- Before Advent begins commit to a time of prayer each day when you will do your reflection. This may be in addition to your normal prayer routine or it may replace it.
- If possible, look up the scripture references for the first reading and Psalm. Begin the time of prayer by reading through these.
- Read through the Gospel slowly.
- Allow a time of silence, asking God to speak to you through these words.
- Read and reflect on the questions supplied.
- Write down any revelations you have received during your time of reflection or any resolutions you would like to make. This will help you remember them and keep track of the way God is working in your life.
- At the end of your reflection time, you may like to finish by praying a short prayer, either in your own words, or something more traditional (e.g. Glory Be, Hail Mary etc.).

USING THE RESOURCE FOR GROUP REFLECTION

Some ideas to consider:

- You may like to set up a focal point that includes an advent wreath/other candle, coloured cloth, an image, flowers, a bible etc. This usually helps set the mood for the reflection and helps to keep people focused.
- If you have an Advent wreath, light the candles that correspond to the week.
- Begin your time of prayer with a short time of silence or a piece of music to help everyone set aside any distractions and focus on God.
- Ask someone from the group to slowly read aloud the Gospel.
- Give everyone a copy of the questions for reflection and allow some time to reflect on the questions listed. You may like to play quiet music during this time.
- Ask if anyone would like to share something that has touched them about the reading, an insight they have had or a resolution they feel called to make. (This should be voluntary as some people's reflections may be personal.)
- Finish using the prayers listed (if using the Sunday reading) or ask people to contribute prayers that are on their hearts. An alternative may be to ask everyone to join in praying the Hail Mary, asking Mary to particularly help them live this time of Advent well.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 1st December

First reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Psalm: 122

Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

MATTHEW 24:37-44

‘As it was in Noah’s day, so will it be when the Son of man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept them all away. This is what it will be like when the Son of man comes. Then of two men in the fields, one is taken, one left; of two women grinding at the mill, one is taken, one left. ‘So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect.

*So stay awake, because you
do not know the day when your
master is coming*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. The Gospel refers of course to the end of time, when Christ will come again and the world will end. We may not see the end of the world but we will die regardless. If I knew I was going to die tomorrow, would I be ready? Are there things I should do now to ensure I am 'ready'?
2. In advent we are waiting for the coming of Jesus, Emmanuel. Sometimes though, we find that we have 'fallen asleep'. What concrete thing can I do today to help remain 'awake' and ready to welcome Jesus into my heart this Christmas? This may be a small act of love for someone, a small sacrifice or something else that reminds me of the coming Christ.

INTENTIONS:

- Pray that in this time of Advent you may not get too caught up in the things of this world but that your heart will still desire the things of heaven. *Lord Hear Us*
- Pray for all those who do not understand the true meaning of Christmas, that the people around them may be able to show them a deeper meaning than material goods. *Lord Hear Us*



MONDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday 2nd December

MATTHEW 8: 5–11

When he went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. ‘Sir,’ he said, ‘my servant is lying at home paralysed and in great pain. ‘Jesus said to him, ‘I will come myself and cure him.’ The centurion replied, ‘Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man, “Go,” and he goes; to another, “Come here,” and he comes; to my servant, “Do this,” and he does it.’ When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, ‘In truth I tell you, in no one in Israel have I found faith as great as this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west and sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of Heaven;

First reading:

Isaiah: 4:2-6

Response: 122:1-2, 3-4b,

4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Jesus shows great compassion for the centurion’s servant and offers to go immediately to help him. When I am faced with people who need help, do I hurry to assist them or do I delay?
2. The centurion shows great faith by believing that a single command from Jesus could cure his servant. He acknowledges Jesus’ authority and trusts that he can fulfil his promises. Do I recognise God as the true authority? Do I trust that God will fulfil the promises he has made to me?
3. In the new translation of the Mass we say, “Lord I am not worthy that you should enter under my roof, but only say the word and my soul shall be healed” which are similar to the words the Centurion spoke. The Centurion believed and trusted that Christ would save his soul, that he could cure his servant without ever having met him. Do I have this same trust in Christ?

TUESDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Memorial of St. Francis Xavier

Tuesday 3rd December

LUKE 10: 21-24

Just at this time, filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said, ‘I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to little children. Yes, Father, for that is what it has pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him. ‘Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them by themselves, ‘Blessed are the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.’

First reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Response: Ps72: 1-2, 7-8,

12-13, 17

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Jesus was ‘filled with the joy of the spirit’, do I remember to express the joy that my relationship with God brings me? Especially at this time of Advent am I clear in why I am looking forward to Christmas, even with people who I know are not religious?
2. Jesus makes the disciples aware of how lucky they are to have seen what they have seen, and hear what they have heard. In what ways can I share what I have seen with others? How do I help them to hear what I have heard?

WEDNESDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Wednesday 4th December

First Reading: Isaiah

25:6-10a

Response Psalm: 23:1-

3a, 3b-4, 5, 6

MATTHEW 15: 29-37

Jesus went on from there and reached the shores of the Lake of Galilee, and he went up onto the mountain. He took his seat, and large crowds came to him bringing the lame, the crippled, the blind, the dumb and many others; these they put down at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were astonished to see the dumb speaking, the cripples whole again, the lame walking and the blind with their sight, and they praised the God of Israel. But Jesus called his disciples to him and said, ‘I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them off hungry, or they might collapse on the way.’ The disciples said to him, ‘Where in a deserted place could we get sufficient bread for such a large crowd to have enough to eat?’ Jesus said to them, ‘How many loaves have you?’ They said, ‘Seven, and a few small fish.’ Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and the fish, and after giving thanks he broke them and began handing them to the disciples, who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected what was left of the scraps, seven baskets full.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. The followers of Jesus brought their loved ones who were suffering to Him and laid them literally at His feet. Do I bring to Jesus the needs of those who are suffering, or do I only think of myself?
2. Jesus showed great compassion for the crowds and wanted to do even more for them than they expected. Do I go out of my way to be compassionate to others or do I simply give them what they ask for?
3. Even though the bread and fish should not have been enough for the crowds, with Jesus’ blessing, there was more than enough. Have I been giving all my talents, however small to God for His use? Or have I kept them to myself and failed to listen to what God is calling me to do with them?

THURSDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Thursday 5th December

First reading: Isaiah 26:1-6
Responsorial Psalm 118: 1,
8-9, 19-21, 25-27a

MATTHEW 7: 21, 24-27

‘It is not anyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord,” who will enter the kingdom of Heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. ‘Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What is the will of our Father in Heaven for me today? In order to do the will of God, I need to first recognise what His will is for me.
2. Do I take time to listen to the words of Jesus? This Advent, can I commit to doing this more often through greater times of prayer and reading the Scriptures?
3. Do I act upon what God is calling me to do? Do I set aside time to discern the plans which God has for me?
4. There are often periods of ‘storms’ in the Church and in our own lives when our beliefs may be challenged. Is my faith built on firm foundations so that when these challenges arise I am able to stand firm in my beliefs?

FRIDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Friday 6th December

First reading: Isaiah 29:17-24
Responsorial Psalm: 27: 1, 4,
13-14

MATTHEW 9: 27–31

As Jesus went on his way two blind men followed him shouting, ‘Take pity on us, son of David.’ And when Jesus reached the house the blind men came up to him and he said to them, ‘Do you believe I can do this?’ They said, ‘Lord, we do.’ Then he touched their eyes saying, ‘According to your faith, let it be done to you.’ And their sight returned. Then Jesus sternly warned them, ‘Take care that no one learns about this.’ But when they had gone away, they talked about him all over the countryside.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Without their faith, these blind men would have remained blind. There is much Jesus can do in our lives too, if we have faith. What might Jesus be calling us to have faith about?
2. Why did Jesus ask the blind men not to talk about this miracle? Do we sometimes lose the focus of who Jesus is and instead expect miracles all the time?

SATURDAY— FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

Memorial of St. Ambrose,
Bishop and Doctor of the Church

Saturday 7th December

First reading: Isaiah 30:19-
21, 23-26
Responsorial Psalm: 147:1-
2, 3-4, 5-6

MATHEW 9:35 10:1-8

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and curing all kinds of disease and all kinds of illness. And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.' He got back in the boat, crossed the water and came to his home town. And suddenly some people brought him a paralytic stretched out on a bed. Seeing their faith, Jesus said to the paralytic, 'Take comfort, my child, your sins are forgiven.' And now some scribes said to themselves, 'This man is being blasphemous.' Knowing what was in their minds Jesus said, 'Why do you have such wicked thoughts in your hearts? Now, which of these is easier: to say, "Your sins are forgiven," or to say, "Get up and walk"? But to prove to you that the Son of man has authority on earth to forgive sins,' - then he said to the paralytic-'get up, pick up your bed and go off home.' And the man got up and went home. A feeling of awe came over the crowd when they saw this, and they praised God for having given such authority to human beings.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Jesus says to his disciples 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out labourers to his harvest.' What does this mean for me in my life? How do I personally respond to this statement?
2. In the passage Jesus exercises his power to forgive sins, this is a radical notion and the people of the time viewed it this way. Do I believe that Christ will, can and has forgiven my sins through the sacrament of reconciliation? Do I fully trust his power and ability to work in this way or do I dwell past and forgiven sins?

*Take comfort,
my child, your
sins are forgiven.*

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 8th December

Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19

Second Reading: Romans 15:4-13

GOSPEL: MATTHEW 3:1-12

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he proclaimed this message in the desert of Judaea, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of Heaven is close at hand.’ This was the man spoken of by the prophet Isaiah when he said: A voice of one that cries in the desert, ‘Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.’ This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather loin-cloth round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers, who warned you to flee from the coming retribution? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance, and do not presume to tell yourselves, “We have Abraham as our father,” because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is being laid to the root of the trees, so that any tree failing to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who comes after me is more powerful than I, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise 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 in a fire that will never go out.’



Prepare a way for
the Lord,
make his paths
straight.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In this reading, Matthew goes into great detail to help us realise that this story really occurred and that Jesus entered into our history. What does this mean for me?
2. In order to prepare the way for Christ, God sent John the Baptist to baptise and encourage us to seek forgiveness. Before we can accept Jesus fully this Christmas it may be helpful to think about the areas in our lives where we need to seek forgiveness.
3. John's mission was to prepare a way for the Lord. In what ways am I being called to help those around me prepare for the birth of Jesus?

INTENTIONS:

- Pray for all priests, religious and church leaders that they may continue to be a living witness of preparation for the Kingdom of God. *Lord Hear Us*
- Pray for those who may not be able to feel the love of Christ at this time, that they might be healed in this joyful time. *Lord Hear Us*

MONDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday 9th December

First Reading: Gen3:9-15, 20
Responsorial Psalm: 98:1,
2-3ab, 3cd-4

LUKE 26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you. 'She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end. 'Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God. 'Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

REFLECTION:

For today's reflection being on a Monday, take time to pray the Joyful Mysteries of the Rosary, reflecting in particular on the first two mysteries seen in today's Gospel; The Annunciation of the Lord to Mary and the Visitation of Mary to Elizabeth.



TUESDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Tuesday 10th December

First reading: Isaiah: 40:1-11

Responsorial Psalm: 96:1-2, 3 and 10ac, 11-12, 13

MATTHEW 18: 12-14

‘Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? In truth I tell you, if he finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. What tenderness and extravagance does Jesus reveal to us about the love God has for each one of us! Do I believe God loves those far from the Church as much as this?
2. When I go astray, do I get tempted into thinking that I am not good enough for God, or do I remember that God is searching for me and would leave everything to get me back?
3. How can I imitate this love Jesus speaks about with those I meet today? When people I care about start to ‘get lost’ and stray from the right path do I go after them?

WEDNESDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Wednesday 11th December

First reading: Isaiah 40: 25-31

Responsorial Psalm: 103: 1-2, 3-4, 8 & 10

MATTHEW 11: 28-30

‘Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.’

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Jesus asks us to take our worries to him and shoulder His yoke in order to find rest for our souls. Do I take up Jesus’ offer to comfort me when I feel overburdened?
2. Jesus teaches us that when we learn to be gentle and humble of heart, we experience the lifting of our burdens. Are there things that are burdening me? In what way can I practise being humble of heart?

THURSDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Thursday 12th December

First Reading: Zechariah
2:14-17 or Revelations 11:
19a, 12:1-6a, 10ab
Psalm: Jdt 13:18bcde, 19a

LUKE 1: 39-47

At that time Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah's home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favoured, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfil his promises to her!" And Mary said: "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour."

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. When we look at this story we are able to take many things from it. Not only did Mary say yes to God but she continuously remembers that it is not her who is great; it is God working through her. This is emphasised in the statement "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Saviour." Do I always remember that it is God who is great? Do I sometimes get caught up in myself and my own success that I forget to thank God for all he has given me?
2. Pray the Magnificat to Mary and ask her for to help you honour God the same way Mary did.

My soul magnifies the Lord

And my spirit rejoices in God my Savior;

Because He has regarded the lowliness of His handmaid;

For behold, henceforth all generations shall call me blessed;

Because He who is mighty has done great things for me,

and holy is His name;

And His mercy is from generation to generation

on those who fear Him.

He has shown might with His arm,

He has scattered the proud in the conceit of their heart.

He has put down the mighty from their thrones,

and has exalted the lowly.

He has filled the hungry with good things,

and the rich He has sent away empty.

He has given help to Israel, his servant, mindful of His mercy

Even as he spoke to our fathers, to Abraham and to his posterity forever.

FRIDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Memorial of Saint Lucy, Virgin and Martyr
Friday 13th December

First reading: Isaiah 48:17-19
Psalm: 1:1-2, 3, 4 & 6

MATTHEW 11: 16-19

‘What comparison can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place: We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn’t dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn’t be mourners. ‘For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, “He is possessed.” The Son of man came, eating and drinking, and they say, “Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.” Yet wisdom is justified by her deeds.’

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. This reading speaks to us of excuses. For both John the Baptist and Jesus, people found reasons to criticise them rather than believe their messages. Do I try to find excuses for not doing what I should?
2. When we do God’s will we are not always popular with contemporary views. What are the teachings of Jesus that our society finds difficult to accept?
3. Jesus leaves us with the words ‘wisdom is justified by her deeds’. This saying teaches us that we must look at a person’s actions or deeds to know their character, rather than listening to what people say about them. How can I live this teaching more in my life?

SATURDAY— SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT

Memorial of Saint John of the Cross, Priest and Doctor of the Church
Saturday 14th December

First reading: Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) 48:1-4, 9-11
Psalm: 80:2ac and 3b, 15-16, 18-19

MATTHEW 17: 9-13

As they came down from the mountain Jesus gave them this order, ‘Tell no one about this vision until the Son of man has risen from the dead.’ And the disciples put this question to him, ‘Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?’ He replied, ‘Elijah is indeed coming, and he will set everything right again; however, I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of man will suffer similarly at their hands.’ Then the disciples understood that he was speaking of John the Baptist.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Jesus refers to both Himself and John the Baptist as Elijah. This was confusing as the Disciples were expecting Elijah himself to return. Some people ask God for signs to help them know His will, yet often we don’t know how to interpret the signs around us. What are some of the signs in my life that God is using to teach me?
2. Jesus knew that like John the Baptist and Elijah, those bringing the message of God experience suffering in this world. Am I prepared to suffer in order to bring the message of God into my world?

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 15th December

First reading: Isaiah 35:1-10

Psalm 146:5-10 or Luke 1:46b-55

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

MATTHEW 11:2-11

Now John had heard in prison what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or are we to expect someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, those suffering from virulent skin-diseases are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised to life and the good news is proclaimed to the poor; and blessed is anyone who does not find me a cause of falling.' As the men were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John, 'What did you go out into the desert to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Look, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my messenger in front of you to prepare your way before you. 'In truth I tell you, of all the children born to women, there has never been anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet the least in the kingdom of Heaven is greater than he.

*I am going to send my
messenger in front of you to
prepare your way before you.*

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. In this Passage Jesus does not go himself to see John, he sends the disciples. When Christ sends me out as he sent the disciples to go and see John, do I respond to his call?
2. Jesus points out the actions of God all around us, clear signs of his immanent presence in the world. The deaf hearing again, the blind made able to see and the dead being raised to life. Do I recognise the presence of God in the world around me? How is God acting in my life right now?
3. Jesus points out that whilst John is a great man, he is not yet perfected as are those who have entered the kingdom of heaven. Do I become discouraged with my own sin so much that I lose sight of the kingdom of God? Do I remember that it is through the love of Christ that we come back to God?

INTENTIONS:

- Pray for a better understanding of how Christ is working in your life, and what His mission is for you. *Lord, hear us.*
- Pray for perseverance, that like John you will keep trying unto death to bring about the Kingdom of God on earth. *Lord, hear us.*



Today is known as Gaudete Sunday. The term Gaudete refers to the first word of the Entrance Antiphon, "Rejoice"

MONDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Monday 16th December

First reading: Numbers 24:

2-7, 15-17

Psalm: 25: 4-5ab, 6 & 7bc, 8-9

MATTHEW 21: 23-27

He had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, ‘What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?’ In reply Jesus said to them, ‘And I will ask you a question, just one; if you tell me the answer to it, then I will tell you my authority for acting like this. John’s baptism: what was its origin, heavenly or human?’ And they argued this way among themselves, ‘If we say heavenly, he will retort to us, “Then why did you refuse to believe him?”; but if we say human, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.’ So their reply to Jesus was, ‘We do not know.’ And he retorted to them, ‘Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.’

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. ‘Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.’ Jesus was unapologetic for who he was, He knew he was the Son of God. Do I like Jesus always defend what I believe and know to be true? Or do I shy away from the truth? Do I stand up for myself and who I am in a way that is not offensive, harmful or detrimental to others?
2. Jesus was very wise with his words, and very intelligent in being able to predict how others around him would respond. Sometimes answering a question with a question is not such a bad thing, if done for the right reason. Particularly when it comes to discerning why a person would like to know particular information, it is not our mission to win arguments it is our mission to share the good news with others. What ways can I use my intelligence when it comes to arguments, not to ‘disarm’ others, or to ‘win’ but to help them see the truth? There are some ‘battles’ which we may never be able to win, how do I discern when it is appropriate or helpful for me to engage in these types of conversations?

Mankind is a great, an immense family... This is proved by what we feel in our hearts at Christmas.

- POPE JOHN XXIII

TUESDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT
Tuesday 17th December

First reading: Genesis 49: 2,
8-10
Psalm: 72: 1-2, 3-4ab, 7-8, 17

MATTHEW 1: 1-17

Roll of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham fathered Isaac, Isaac fathered Jacob, Jacob fathered Judah and his brothers, Judah fathered Perez and Zerah, whose mother was Tamar, Perez fathered Hezron, Hezron fathered Ram, Ram fathered Amminadab, Amminadab fathered Nahshon, Nahshon fathered Salmon, Salmon fathered Boaz, whose mother was Rahab, Boaz fathered Obed, whose mother was Ruth, Obed fathered Jesse; and Jesse fathered King David. David fathered Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon fathered Rehoboam, Rehoboam fathered Abijah, Abijah fathered Asa, Asa fathered Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat fathered Joram, Joram fathered Uzziah, Uzziah fathered Jotham, Jotham fathered Ahaz, Ahaz fathered Hezekiah, Hezekiah fathered Manasseh, Manasseh fathered Amon, Amon fathered Josiah; and Josiah fathered Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah fathered Shealtiel, Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel fathered Abiud, Abiud fathered Eliakim, Eliakim fathered Azor, Azor fathered Zadok, Zadok fathered Achim, Achim fathered Eliud, Eliud fathered Eleazar, Eleazar fathered Matthan, Matthan fathered Jacob; and Jacob fathered Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. It may be tempting to skip over this reading; this gospel is not one we feel speaks to us so much. For the Jewish people however the blood line of Christ is a crucial element. Do I sometimes feel like there are parts of Catholic teaching which are a bit dry, or hard to understand, do I try my hardest to get an understanding of why these are important and why the church values them?
2. To go back and put more context around this Gospel read Gods covenant with Abraham in Genesis chapter 15. You will notice Gods promise to Abraham that "They shall come back here in the fourteenth generation". Do I always appreciate or try to seek out the intricacies of the bible?

WEDNESDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Wednesday 18th December

First reading: Jeremiah

23:5-8

Psalm: 72, 1-2, 12-13, 18-19

MATTHEW 1:18-25

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins. 'Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! The virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home; he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. St Joseph showed great courage believing in the message of the Angel and taking Mary into his home. Has God ever prompted me to do something unusual or out of character? Do I invite God into my decisions in life?
2. We are told that the name Emmanuel means 'God-is-with-us'. God wanted us to know that since Jesus' birth, he is particularly with us. Is there something I can do to help me remember this?

THURSDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Thursday 19th December

First reading: Judges 132-

7, 24-25

Psalm: 71:3-4, 5-6, 16-17

LUKE 1:5-25

In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. Both were upright in the sight of God and impeccably carried out all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren and they were both advanced in years. Now it happened that it was the turn of his section to serve, and he was exercising his priestly office before God when it fell to him by lot, as the priestly custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. And at the

hour of incense all the people were outside, praying. Then there appeared to him the angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the altar of incense. The sight disturbed Zechariah and he was overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, 'Zechariah, do not be afraid, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you shall name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord; he must drink no wine, no strong drink; even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the Israelites to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to reconcile fathers to their children and the disobedient to the good sense of the upright, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I know this? I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel, who stand in God's presence, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Look! Since you did not believe my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened.' Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were surprised that he stayed in the sanctuary so long. When he came out he could not speak to them, and they realised that he had seen a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them and remained dumb. When his time of service came to an end he returned home. Sometime later his wife Elizabeth conceived and for five months she kept to herself, saying, 'The Lord has done this for me, now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered in public.'

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Unlike Mary who asked the angel how it could happen, Zechariah asks the angel 'how can I know this?' -in other words 'how can I believe this'? Both of these people were good, faithful Jews and yet when God's messenger came to them Zechariah lost faith. Have there been times where I have lost faith in God?
2. As Zechariah could not speak, Elizabeth did not know about the message of the angel. Even so, when she became pregnant she knew it was through God's intervention. When my prayers are answered, do I remember to give God thanks?

FRIDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Friday 20th December

First Reading: Isaiah

7:10-14

Psalm: 24: 1-2, 3-4, 5-6

LUKE 1:26-38

In the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, 'Rejoice, you who enjoy God's favour! The Lord is with you.' She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, 'Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Look! You are to conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I have no knowledge of man?' The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. And I tell you this too: your cousin Elizabeth also, in her old age, has conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' Mary said, 'You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said.' And the angel left her.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. 'And the Angel left her'. This was quite a message - Mary probably had many other questions in her heart, yet she was left alone immediately after saying yes. Sometimes we can feel overwhelmed by the mission God has laid before us. When I feel alone do I remember the words of the angel 'the Lord is with you' and 'do not be afraid'?
2. In the busyness of Christmas preparations we can sometimes lose focus of what the real message of Christmas is. In this reading we are reminded of the great love and faithfulness of God who chose to intervene with time to give us a King whose reign would last forever. How can I make sure I stay focused for the last few days of advent?

SATURDAY— THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT

Saturday 21st December

First Reading: Song
of Solomon 2: 8-14 or
Zephaniah 3:14-18
Psalm: 33:2-3, 11-12, 20-21

LUKE 1:39-45

Mary set out at that time and went as quickly as she could into the hill country to a town in Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now it happened that as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, 'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? Look, the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Mary, though pregnant herself, immediately goes to offer support to Elizabeth. How do I support pregnant women I know?
2. Inspired by the Holy Spirit, Elizabeth exclaims the words of the "Hail Mary" that are so familiar to us: "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." We too have been honoured to receive Mary - as our heavenly mother. Are there any prayers I can ask Mary to join me in praying for?

Advent, this powerful liturgical season that we are beginning, invites us to pause in silence to understand a presence. It is an invitation to understand that the individual events of the day are hints that God is giving us, signs of the attention he has for each one of us.

POPE BENEDICT XVI, ADVENT 2009

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Sunday 22nd December

First Reading: Isaiah 7:10-16

Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

MATTHEW 1:18-25

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being an upright man and wanting to spare her disgrace, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when suddenly the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.' Now all this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken through the prophet: Look! The virgin is with child and will give birth to a son whom they will call Immanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'. When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home; he had not had intercourse with her when she gave birth to a son; and he named him Jesus.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Joseph was ready to leave Mary when he found out she was pregnant, and he planned to do it in such a way that would be considered kind in light of the era in which they lived. But when an angel of the Lord came to him, and told him of the plans God had for him, Mary and the child she was pregnant with, Joseph listened to God and stayed with Mary. Are there times in my life when I have done something, not necessarily because I wanted to but because it was what God needed me to do?

2. **If Joseph had left Mary she would have been considered an outcast and not accepted into society. Is there something I can offer up today that will not benefit me, but benefit those on the margins in our society?**

INTENTIONS:

- **Pray for all those who may not have anyone to spend this time of Christmas with. *Lord, hear us.***
- **Pray for all women, particularly those who are pregnant or struggling with the reality of pregnancy, that God may shower his love upon them and that they might respond with trust. *Lord, hear us.***

OTHER THINGS YOU MIGHT TRY THIS ADVENT

1. Set up a Nativity (scene) in your home
2. Make an Advent wreath and use it each day/week
3. Invite someone to come to Christmas Mass with you
4. Attend a local Christmas Carols night
5. Watch a real Christmas movie e.g. “The Nativity Story” (2006)
6. Visit “Road to Bethlehem” in Melbourne’s Eastern suburbs and watch the Christmas story performed in a live re-enactment. (Monday 9 - Thursday 12, December 7.00pm till late). Visit www.roadtobethlehem.org for more details.)
7. Send Christmas Cards with a picture of the nativity on it (instead of Santa!)
8. Buy a gift for someone who may not receive anything this Christmas
9. Do an extra act of kindness e.g. visit someone who is lonely or volunteer for a special Christmas effort
10. Pray the Rosary, especially the five “Joyful” mysteries as they help us enter into the season of Advent
11. If someone you know has nowhere to go on Christmas day invite them to join your celebrations or offer to visit them.

LUKE 1:57-66

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had lavished on her his faithful love, they shared her joy. Now it happened that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. ‘No,’ she said, ‘He is to be called John.’ They said to her, ‘But no one in your family has that name,’ and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, ‘His name is John.’ And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. ‘What will this child turn out to be?’ They wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Elizabeth was prepared to speak up and say what God had told her to say, she told everyone her son wouldn't be named after his father even though this went against the custom of the time. When my beliefs are challenged by my peers do I stick to what God has instructed me to do?
2. Elizabeth's husband Zachariah had faith and trusted in God, that by breaking this tradition, because of Gods command, his speech would be returned. Often we find it hard to believe that God will heal us, and find it even harder to trust that he will. What can I trust God with today?

Only if people change will the world change; and in order to change, people need the light that comes from God, the light which so unexpectedly [on the night of Christmas] entered into our night.

TUESDAY— FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT

Christmas Eve Morning Mass

Tuesday 24th December

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14 & 16
Psalm: 89:2-3, 4-5, 27 & 29

LUKE 1:67-79

His father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has visited his people, he has set them free, and he has established for us a saving power in the House of his servant David, just as he proclaimed, by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all those who hate us, and show faithful love to our ancestors, and so keep in mind his holy covenant. This was the oath he swore to our father Abraham, that he would grant us, free from fear, to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, to serve him in holiness and uprightness in his presence, all our days. And you, little child, you shall be called Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare a way for him, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins, because of the faithful love of our God in which the rising Sun has come from on high to visit us, to give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow dark as death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION:

1. Zechariah rejoices at the prospect of being able to serve God in holiness, without fear. We are so blessed to be able to practise our faith without the fears that many experience around the world. Do I take advantage of this freedom? Do I pray for those who cannot express their faith because of the country they live in?
2. This is the last day before we welcome the infant Jesus once more at Christmas Eve Mass tonight. Zechariah claims that God will not only bring light into a world of darkness, but bring about peace. Do I bring light to those who are in darkness or peace to people who are suffering?
3. What will I do tomorrow to make Christmas day better for everyone I know?



THE ADVENT WREATH

MANY OF US ASSOCIATE THE ADVENT WREATH WITH PREPARING FOR CHRISTMAS, BUT WHAT DOES IT ACTUALLY SIGNIFY?



The **circle** in the advent wreath symbolises God and eternity. The **wreath** is made from evergreen leaves which remind us of springtime and new life. The **candles** remind us of the Light of the World that is coming through the birth of Jesus who takes away sin and darkness.

Each week of advent we light a new candle, as well as the candles from the previous weeks. The **four outer candles** symbolise the waiting and expectancy we feel during the lead up to Christmas. Three of the candles are **purple and one is pink**. The **purple candles** are in line with the liturgical colour of advent. The **pink candle** is usually lit on the third Sunday of Advent and reminds us of the joy we feel knowing that Christmas is approaching. In the centre of the wreath is a **white candle** which is known as the Christ Candle. This is lit on Christmas Eve as we celebrate Jesus' birth.

BLESSING OF THE ADVENT WREATH

If you have an Advent wreath at home, you may consider displaying it somewhere in the house and lighting the candles at prayer times or during family meals. It is traditional to bless the wreath before lighting the first Candle. You may like to use this blessing:

All make the sign of cross

Leader: Our help is in the name of the Lord.

People: Who made heaven and earth.

Reader: A Reading from the prophet Isaiah: (9:1-2, 5-6)

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; Upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shone. You have brought them abundant joy and great rejoicing, As they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as men make merry when dividing spoils. For a child is born to us, a son is given us; upon his shoulder

dominion rests. They name him Wonder-Counsellor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.

His dominion is vast and forever peaceful, From David's throne, and over his kingdom, which he confirms and sustains. By judgment and justice, both now and forever.

Leader:

Lord our God, We praise you for your Son, Jesus Christ: He is Emmanuel, the hope of the peoples, He is the wisdom that teaches and guides us, He is the Saviour of every nation. Lord God, Let your blessing come upon us as we light the candles of this wreath. May the wreath and its light be a sign of Christ's promise to bring us salvation. May he come quickly and not delay. We ask this through Christ our Lord.

People: Amen.

Excerpted from the Shorter Book of Blessings (NY: Catholic Book Publishing Co., 1990).

I wait for the Lord,
my soul waits and
in his word I hope.

PSALM 130:5

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To assist us in creating this reference we used the following resources:

www.ewtn.com

www.catholic.org

The 'Laudate' App

Created by the Archdiocesan Office for Youth,
an agency of the Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne.

Advent 2013