

Advent Waiting...

We welcome Advent, with its theme of expectation, of longing for God's coming amongst us. The question is, "Will God come in our hearts and hands this season? How else will the work of compassion and kindness, of justice and peace continue? In the darkness of our world, it is we who have been called to lead others to the Light, heal wounds, to unite what has fallen apart, to be peacemakers (Sue and Leo Kane, 2019).

We Watch, We Wait

Our southern Advent is a season of hard joy and peace, a beginning time of the Church's year in the frantic end time of our social calendar.

We watch, we wait!

We seek in these days to prepare a way into its mystery lest the Word be far from us, lest He come unrecognised And so...

We watch, we wait!

Advent is the greening of the earth with hope that springs from the tired dryness of the old church year; a greening with the hope that when human history comes full term and the birth pangs of creation erupt into a new heaven and a new earth, and God, Emmanuel is everything to everyone.

We watch, we wait!

Advent is preparing to give birth to the One who has come and is coming, mindful that our life's work is to conceive him, with seed of God's grace, and bear Jesus to our world.

We watch, we wait!



Advent Week 1

Stay Awake. The Messiah is coming.

As Advent begins, St Mark calls us to be watchful and alert, to be ready for the coming of the Lord. Each of us is called by God through Baptism to lead lives of holiness, to work for justice and peace because of the love that Jesus modelled for us in His life, death and Resurrection.

Mark 13: 33-37

Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his servants in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Watch therefore—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning— lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch."

Reflection

We are called to be prepared for the coming of Jesus -

How might you prepare your heart and life during Advent?

How can you be better about turning yourself more to God in moments when you are 'falling asleep on the watch'?

Prayer

God of wakefulness,
You, on whom we rely,
Merit us with your joy and peace
As we journey through this Advent time.

O come, Emmanuel!

You are the promise,

For you we wait.



Advent Week 2

Prepare the way for the Lord.

John the Baptist arrives on the scene to announce the imminent arrival of the Messiah. John is the herald of the Saviour, the promised Messiah, who is to come. We wait for a time of perfect justice, and we are all called to repent, to turn away from ways of living that are not in right relationship with one another and with God. John's words are for the people of his time and for us today.

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.^[a]

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,^[b]

“Behold, I send my messenger before thy face,
who shall prepare thy way;

the voice of one crying in the wilderness:

Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight—”

John the baptiser appeared^[c] in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And there went out to him all the country of Judea, and all the people of Jerusalem; and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist, and ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “After me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptised you with water; but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.



Reflection

Why is it important to have time to prepare before an important event?

Why does Mark quote from the prophet Isaiah before he begins to write about John the Baptist?

Think about your life.

What is one way Jesus is calling you to be a witness to his presence in the world?

What am I doing individually and as a member of my Church to nurture a spirit of respect and love?

Prayer

God, ever present, yet always expected.

Attune our hearts to the signs of your coming

And our minds to the unfolding of your promise.

Relieve us of the burdens we make for ourselves as we journey through this Advent time.

**O come, Emmanuel!
You are the promise,
For you we wait.**

Advent Week 3

Testify to the light.

John the Baptist is facing a barrage of questions from the priests, Levites and Pharisees. His responses point to the Light. He unequivocally states that he is not the Light, Rather, the one to lead people to the Light.

Gaudate Sunday, the Sunday when the rose candle is lit on the Advent Wreath signals the coming of Jesus, The Light of the world.

John 1: 6-8; 19-28

There was a man sent from God whose name was John. 7 He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. 8 He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.

Now this was John's testimony when the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem sent priests and Levites to ask him who he was. He did not fail to confess, but confessed freely, "I am not the Messiah."

They asked him, "Then who are you? Are you Elijah?"

He said, "I am not."

"Are you the Prophet?"

He answered, "No."

Finally, they said, "Who are you? Give us an answer to take back to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

John replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'"

Now the Pharisees who had been sent, questioned him, "Why then do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet?"

"I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one you do not know.

He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie." This all happened at Bethany on the other side of the Jordan, where John was baptizing.

Reflection

What is your message – the truth you really want the world to know?

Sometimes our path toward Christmas can get a little crooked.

Do you find yourself placing too much importance on the material instead of the real reason for the celebration?

What lessons have you learnt from John the Baptist so far?

How are you preparing your heart for His arrival?

How are you a sign to others of faith in Christ?

Hidden God, we can't help noticing that you turn all our assumptions upside down. So, when you came amongst us, you chose to be a little child, humble and poor. We need your help to start seeing our world as you see it. Give us fresh eyes, so that we might learn to find you in unexpected people and places.



Prayer

God, of light and darkness.

Just as your light

Reveals every dark corner,

May we leave no-one in the darkness

Of poverty, anxiety and oppression

As we journey in this Advent time.

O come, Emmanuel!

You are the promise,

For you we wait.

Advent Week 4

I am the servant of the Lord. May His will for me be done.

Mary's 'yes' changed the world! Because she said 'yes', she became a mother, both Mother of Christ and Mother of the Church. Mary received explicit instructions from God's messenger Gabriel, "You will conceive a son, His name will be Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High."

Luke 1: 26-38

In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary. The angel went to her and said, "Greetings, you who are highly favoured! The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favour with God. You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."

"How will this be," Mary asked the angel, "since I am a virgin?"

The angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God. Even Elizabeth your relative is going to have a child in her old age, and she who was said to be unable to conceive is in her sixth month. For no word from God will ever fail."

"I am the Lord's servant," Mary answered. "May your word to me be fulfilled." Then the angel left her.



Reflection

What is the greatest news that you have ever heard in your life?

Why did it make you so happy?

What are some of the titles that the Angel uses to describe Jesus?

What do these titles mean to you?

What is the kingdom that Jesus will rule forever?

How is the coming of Jesus into the world connected with the coming of the Kingdom of God?

Prayer

Holy God,

Encourage us when what lies before us is difficult.

May we discern God's call in our daily lives,

And accept His plan for us

With a joyful and accepting 'Yes'

As we journey through this Advent time.

O come, Emmanuel!

You are the promise,

For you we wait.

