

Advent at Home 2021

PART 3: Reflections & Prayers

MAKE ROOM FOR JESUS

Preparing our Hearts
for Christmas



**CHURCH OF
ST MARY OF THE ANGELS**
LITURGY & PRAYER

*Painting by James Tissot
(1836-1902)*



Family Reflections for Advent Liturgy

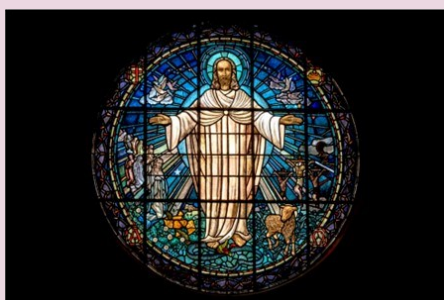
To balance the two elements of **anticipation** and **remembrance**, the first two Sundays in Advent look forward to Christ's second coming, and the last two look backward to remember Christ's first coming.

Scripture Readings

Over the course of the four weeks, Scripture readings move from passages about Christ's return in judgment to Old Testament passages about the expectation of the coming Messiah to New Testament passages about the announcements of Christ's arrival by John the Baptist.

Week 1

focuses on the second coming of Christ



Week 2

brings us the story of the ministry and prophetic role of John the Baptist



Week 3

focuses on John the Baptist's message of judgment as well as a call to rejoice



Week 4

focuses on the role of Mary



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The readings look forward to the "End Times" and the coming of the "Day of the Lord" or the "Messianic Age".

Readings

First Reading | Jeremiah 33:14-16

The time is coming when the Lord's promise to Israel will be fulfilled. An offspring of David will come and bring justice for all nations of the world.

Second Reading | 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

Paul prayed to the Lord for the Christians of Thessalonica that their love for one another would overflow and that their hearts might be blameless and holy before God.

Gospel | Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

There will be great signs in the heavens and great distress on the earth when the Son of Man comes in glory. Therefore, "be vigilant at all times...to stand before the Son of Man."



The readings for the first Sunday of Advent invite us to seek a permanent peace that can calm hearts made anxious by a chaotic and violent world. In the Gospel, we hear Jesus speak to his disciples about the need for vigilance and prayer as they wait for the coming of the Son of Man in glory.

Jesus does not promise deliverance from anxiety or tribulations. He encourages his disciples to pray for strength.

Advent is the time when we discover hope in the midst of complete desolation.



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reflection Questions

1. What are some of the ways that Jesus shows up in our daily lives? Are you ready for them?
2. How can we prepare ourselves for these moments in life when Jesus shows up and calls us to love and bring hope to others? How can we learn to love better, and to become better people?

PRAYER

(Someone in the family lights one purple candle. Prayer can be said by different members of the family.)

Heavenly Father,

Advent is a time for remembering and reflecting on the birth of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Father, we pray that you will turn our hearts toward you as Christmas approaches.

Let us not get caught up in the hustle and bustle of the season this year and miss the chance to celebrate the gifts of hope, peace, joy and love that you sent to us on that first Christmas.

Father God, every word in scripture points to the gift of hope that we have because of Christ Jesus. You showed us a glimmer of that hope as you chose to send your son into this earth. That first Christmas, you gave us the gift of hope wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger.



*Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift.
In Jesus' precious name, we pray. **Amen.***

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The readings remind us that the past, present and future coming of Jesus into the world is the fulfillment of the saving plan of God. They deal with coming home – Babylonian exiles coming home, the shalom or perfect peace of coming home, our going home with Jesus at his Second Coming, and Jesus, the Savior, “coming home” into our lives during Advent.

Readings

First Reading | Baruch 5:1-9

Rejoice, Jerusalem, and be glad! The glory of God will shine upon you. The mountains and valleys will become a level plain. "God is leading Israel in joy."

Second Reading | Philippians 1:4-6, 8-11

Paul prayed for the Philippians that the good work begun in them may be "filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ."

Gospel | Luke 3:1-6

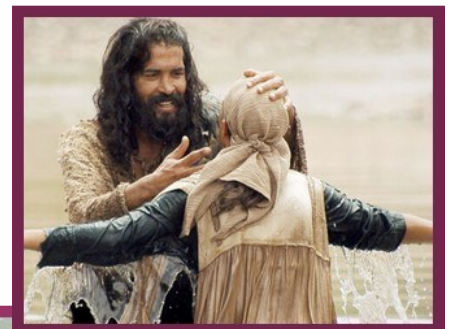
The word of God was spoken to John the Baptist. From that time on he went about proclaiming a baptism of repentance, saying, "Prepare the way of the Lord."



The longing for salvation expressed by God's people in last Sunday's readings centers around John the Baptist today. He, like the prophet Baruch, asks a sleeping and frustrated people to wake up and clothe itself in happiness after atoning.

In the second reading, the Philippians discover they must share that love with humanity just as Christ did when he was born for us.

John the Baptist baptises for repentance and for forgiveness of sins, preparing the way for God's salvation.



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reflection Questions

1. John's preaching reminds us also of our important task of announcing Christ to others through our lives at home and in the community. How have/can we done/do this in our lives?
2. We are invited by the Church to prepare for Christmas by repenting of our sins and renewing our lives. In what ways have we been forgiving of others and brought peace to others?



(Someone in the family lights the purple candle from the first week plus one more purple candle. Prayer can be said by different members of the family.)

Heavenly Father,

You are the God who gives us peace. Regardless of our circumstances or our situations, you offer us peace that passes understanding.

That first Christmas, when you sent your Son, you sent the one who is called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace. Even the angels cried out, "Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth peace to those on whom his favour rests."



We are able to have the fullness of peace in our hearts on Christmas day, and every day, because that same Jesus sits at your right hand in heaven and makes intercession for us. Not only that, but he paid our sin debt.

Keep us in perfect peace as our mind is stayed on the truth of your powerful love. Help us to trust fully in you and rest in the peace that you offer. In the precious name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The third Sunday of Advent is also called Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete is a Latin word that means "rejoice." This name is taken from the entrance antiphon for Sunday's Mass, which is also echoed in today's second reading from the Paul's letter to the Philippians.

Readings

First Reading | Zephaniah 3:14-18a

Be joyful, Jerusalem! The Lord will come and save you from your enemies. Do not be discouraged or lose heart, for "the Lord, your God, is in your midst, a mighty savior."

Second Reading | Philippians 4:4-7

"Rejoice in the Lord always," wrote Paul. "I say it again: rejoice! The Lord is near. Make your requests known to God; then the peace of God that surpasses understanding will guard your hearts and minds."

Gospel | Luke 3:10-18

John the Baptist said to the crowds, "I am baptizing you with water, but one mightier than I is coming. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire." In that way he preached good news to the people.



The prophet Zephaniah encourages Jerusalem and Israel to shout out for the joy of expecting its deliverance from the Lord. St. Paul echoes this message of joy in a letter written from imprisonment:

"Rejoice in the Lord always..."

John the Baptist explains the secret of Christian joy as our wholehearted commitment to God by doing His will. John challenges people to generosity and sense of fairness so that others may have reason to rejoice.



According to John, happiness comes from doing our duties faithfully, doing good for others and sharing our blessings with others in need.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reflection Questions

1. We rejoice in the saving power of God this third Sunday of Advent. We joyfully sing praises to God for all the good things that He has done for us. What are some things that make you joyful?
2. What can you do to express your joy this season? How can you spread joy to others?

PRAYER

(Someone in the family lights the two previously lit purple candles plus the rose candle. Prayer can be said by different members of the family.)

Heavenly Father, help us remember that the good news of Jesus' birth has the power to bring us great joy this Christmas season. Our joy isn't dependent on what is going on in our life, in our world, the people we are with or the gifts we receive. **Our joy comes from you.**

That joy that flooded the hearts of the shepherds, the angels, the wise men, and Mary and Joseph is the joy that has the power to overwhelm our hearts with rejoicing.

Father, you offer that same joy to us now if we know you and recognise Jesus as our Saviour and Lord. You gave us a reason to celebrate when you gave us the unspeakable gift of Jesus Christ. who came to dwell among us. Jesus overcame death and rose from the dead for us. You forgive our sins and give us eternal life when we believe in you.



Our joy is a gift. It is the gift that you gave us that first Christmas in Jesus Christ. Fill our hearts with joy this Advent season as we reflect on the good news of Jesus' birth. In Jesus' precious name we pray.

Amen.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

The Gospels tell of the events that preceded and prepared for the birth of Jesus in the Annunciation.

Readings

First Reading | Micah 5:1-4a

Out of tiny Bethlehem will come one who is to be ruler over all Israel. "He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock ... he shall be peace."

Second Reading | Hebrews 10:5-10

God took no delight in holocausts and sin offerings, even those that fulfilled the law. Rather, God desired Christ. By death, Jesus took away the first covenant to set up the second.

Gospel | Luke 1:39-45

When Mary visited Zechariah's house, Elizabeth greeted her: "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb." When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, "the infant leaped in her womb."



The prophet Micah points out that the "ruler in Israel" must be born in Bethlehem to "shepherd his flock" because "**he shall be peace**".

In the Letter to the Hebrews, the author proclaims, our sacrifice, united with Christ's, is not based on holocausts or vain offerings but on our **selfless acceptance of God's will**.

During her visit to Elizabeth, the Virgin Mary continues to be a **model of evangelization** for all of us, who are called to bring the good news of salvation to our neighbors and friends.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

Reflection Questions

1. Mary models true discipleship for us. Even though she too is with child and she goes to visit her elderly cousin. Do you have older family members or neighbors who need your help and support? How can you reach out to them in love?
2. What are the signs of the Lord coming to us that would cause us to “leap for joy” and begin to overflow with blessing and wonder? Who and where are the “Marys” that would greet us? How have we responded to this?

PRAYER

(Someone in the family lights all of the four advent candles of the wreath. Prayer can be said by different members of the family.)

Heavenly Father,

the whole meaning of Christmas can be explained in one little four-letter word... LOVE. You sent your gift of pure love to us that first Christmas. Love descended from heaven to be born of a virgin.

Love lay in the hay of a manger in a meagre barn in Bethlehem. You came as an innocent baby whose purpose was to walk this earth in complete love and then to sacrificially give your life as an atonement for the sins of your children.

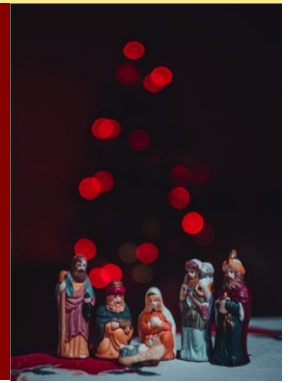


You willingly gave the gift of your life because of your love. Your righteous blood covered our sin. You redeem and restore us when we confess you as Lord and Savior of our life. In that moment, you give us the gift of your love for all eternity. We receive grace upon grace and mercy upon mercy in that moment. Fill our hearts and minds with the significance of that truth.

*Thank you, Father, for your immeasurable gift.
In Jesus' precious name, we pray. **Amen.***

LITURGY: Christmas Eve

DID YOU KNOW? Christmas is the only day on the liturgical calendar that has **FOUR** different sets of readings for four different Masses celebrated at various times: 1. Vigil Mass (Christmas Eve), 2. Mass at Midnight, 3. Mass at Dawn, and 4. Mass during the Day. The Gospel readings for the first three Masses contain biblical accounts of the birth of Jesus (from Matthew and Luke), and the Gospel reading for the Mass of Christmas Day is the Prologue of John's Gospel (John 1:1-18).



For the liturgy of the **Vigil Mass**, God's activity in history is readily perceived. God wanted to rescue his people by sending a saviour. The readings gradually reveal who the Saviour is: born of David's lineage, according to God's promise.

For the **Midnight Mass**, the readings stress the impact the birth of the Saviour has on the people who await his coming. **He is the light** that dissipates all darkness and illuminates the steps that lead us to a true peace.



The narrative chosen from the Gospel of Luke transcends the events that occurred in the manger in Bethlehem two thousand years ago. The child born becomes one with us in all things, except for sin, **to help us walk always in his light.**

Readings

First Reading | Isaiah 9:1-6

"For a child is born to us, a son is given us," prophesied Isaiah. "They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero, Father-Forever, Prince of Peace. His dominion is vast."

Second Reading | Titus 2:11-14

God's grace appeared in the savior Christ Jesus, offering salvation to all people. Paul told Titus that the appearance of Christ trains us "to live temperately, justly and devoutly."

Gospel | Luke 2:1-14

Mary gave birth to her firstborn and laid him in a manger. The angel of the Lord appeared to shepherds nearby to tell them the good news. An angelic choir sang, "Glory to God in the highest."

LITURGY: *Christmas Day*

The readings for **Christmas Day** invite us to appreciate the revealed message of the mystery of the Incarnation that we celebrate on this great solemnity.

If children celebrate the birth of Jesus, adults should understand even more deeply that Jesus is the Word-made-flesh, that he became man, and that through him God spoke to us, we who had been spoken to in many other ways before (Letter to the Hebrews).



Jesus is the messenger who announces peace (Isaiah), the splendor of the glory of God, ***the true light that illuminates all those who come into the world.***

Readings

First Reading | Isaiah 52:7-10

The ends of the earth will see God's salvation. Break forth together in song, Jerusalem, for the good news of peace has come. God redeems Jerusalem and gives comfort to all people.

Second Reading | Hebrews 1:1-6

"In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets," but now we have God's own heir, the glory of the Lord who sustains all things. Let all angels worship God's first-born, God's heir, God's son.

Gospel | John 1:1-18

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us, and we saw his glory... full of grace and truth." We all have partaken of this fullness: love following love.

Reflection Questions

1. How has your Advent journey (self, family or community) brought hope, peace, joy and love to others?
2. How can we share and celebrate the story of Christmas meaningfully with others?

Prayer to the Holy Family

“Amoris Laetitia” (The Joy of Love) - by Pope Francis

Someone in the family lights all of the four advent candles and the fifth candle of the wreath.
Baby Jesus can also be placed on the crib by the youngest member of the family.
Members of the family may take turns to recite this prayer.



Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
in you we contemplate
the splendor of true love;
to you we turn with trust.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
grant that our families too
may be places of communion and prayer,
authentic schools of the Gospel
and small domestic churches.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
may families never again experience
violence, rejection and division;
may all who have been hurt or scandalised
find ready comfort and healing.

Holy Family of Nazareth,
make us once more mindful
of the sacredness and inviolability of the family,
and its beauty in God's plan.

Jesus, Mary and Joseph,
graciously hear our prayer.