

STAY AWAKE!

Prepare for the Coming of Christ

Advent Companion 2022

Catholic Archdiocese of Sydney







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Cover Image: *L'Adoration des bergers* by Charles Le Brun, 1689.

Credit: (C) RMN-Grand Palais (musée du Louvre) / Franck Raux

Image at Left: *Adoration of the Shepherds* by School of Raphael, between 1624 and 1630. Credit: Henry Townsend/Wikimedia Commons, Public Domain



Introduction

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

The Season of Advent affords us an opportunity to prepare for the celebration of the birth of Our Lord at Christmas; we do this with anticipation and joy. And because we so often forget, the Season also serves to remind us that we await the advent of Christ at the end of time; we do this with hope and with contrite hearts. This Season is a gift, given to us each year by our Mother Church, to purify us so that we may experience the tender and intimate love of Jesus.

The joy and peace that we hope to experience at Christmas depends to a certain extent on the manner in which we prepare for it. Unlike the Season of Lent - where the Church prescribes our means of preparation with prayer, fasting and almsgiving - we are encouraged during Advent to discover our own path of conversion. This Advent Companion offers each of us a way of meditating on the Word of God, and of reflecting on how we can respond in simple yet sincere ways.

Let us come closer to Jesus this Advent. Let us stay awake! Let us set aside time to pray, to reflect on His Word, and to avail ourselves of the Sacraments, so that when we celebrate His birth, we can offer Him the gift of hearts and lives truly transformed.

Helen Wagner

Parish Renewal Team

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This Season is a gift, given to us each year by our Mother Church, to purify us so that we may experience the tender and intimate love of Jesus.

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The stained-glass window from the church of Ss Philip and James in Oxford, of the Blessed Virgin Mary, looking to Christ in prayer.
Credit: Lawrence OP/Flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

How to use this *Advent Companion*

This is a suggestion for how individuals and small groups could use this Companion. Put aside time in the week leading to each Sunday or on the day itself (the same in relation to Christmas Day).

1. **Begin with the Opening Prayer** in which you entrust the time to God and ask for His grace.

2. **Prayerfully read the Gospel passage.** An ancient method of doing this is *lectio divina* (divine reading), which is outlined briefly on this page. You may find it helpful to read the Gospel passage more than once.

3. **Read the Gospel reflection.**

4. **Take some time to pray**, using the questions as a guide to considering more deeply the Gospel passage and the reflection. You may find it helpful to use a journal to write down your thoughts. Groups may choose to discuss the responses to the questions.

5. **Pray the Closing Prayer.**

6. **Conclude by singing or praying** the hymn *O Come, O Come, Emmanuel*.

Additional Material (pages 16-21)

Examination of Conscience

Advent is a fitting time to receive God's mercy and grace in the Sacrament of Penance (also called 'Confession' or 'Reconciliation'). In order to prepare well, you may find it helpful to use the Examination of Conscience in this Resource.

Homily on the Coming of Christ

An excerpt from a homily given by St Bernard of Clairvaux may aid your prayer and preparation for the coming of Christ this Christmas.

Sharing the Gift of Faith

Christmas is a wonderful occasion to reach out as a parish, and to invite and welcome others. Using the suggestions provided, consider what you can do in your parish to bring the Good News to the local community.

Lectio Divina

Lectio (reading)

Begin by reading the passage slowly and gently either aloud or silently. It is helpful to savour each portion, constantly listening for a word or a phrase which speaks to your heart. It is helpful sometimes to read the passage again, going back to certain words, repeating them, memorising them and allowing them to sink in more deeply.

Meditatio (meditation)

Ponder more deeply on the words or images which speak to you, allowing the words to move from the head to the heart. Continue to sit with these words, ruminating on them, engaging your mind, and reflect on what God might be saying to you through them. Give this to God and allow the light of the Word to shed new levels of meaning on them.

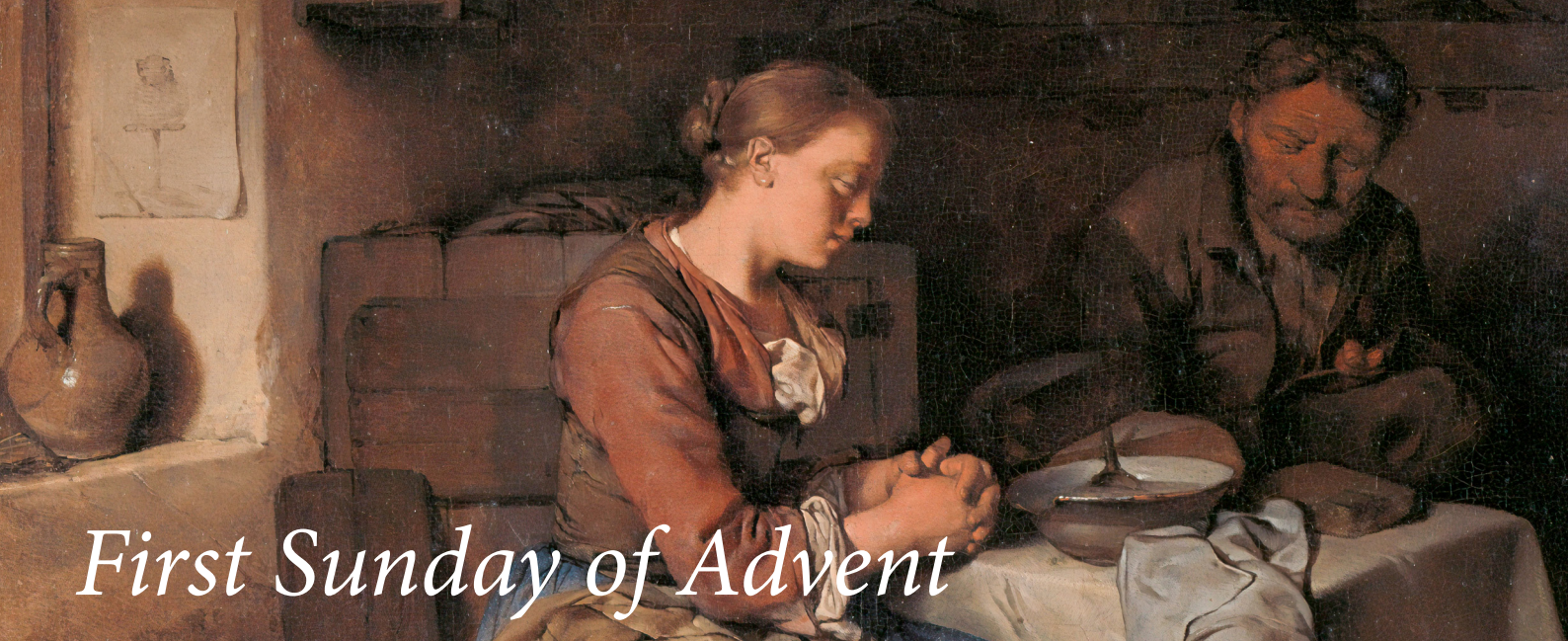
Oratio (prayer)

Speak to God in response to the Word or the thoughts which arose during meditation. This dialogue or prayer can take many forms – thoughts, ideas, writing, images or simply sitting in deep silent awareness of God's presence. The important thing is to speak to God just as we would with someone who knows and loves us.

Contemplatio (contemplation)

In this step, our words and thoughts subside and give way to silent presence where we rest in God's embrace. This experience may last for only a short time, or for a longer period, depending on the individual and the grace of God. Here we allow God to take over and we simply let go and receive.

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Visit www.jamberooabbey.org.au/prayer/lectio-divina-praying-with-the-sacred-scriptures/



First Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we surrender this moment to you now as we meditate on your Word in this Gospel passage and reflection. May this time of preparation during the Season of Advent bring us closer to you, so that we may present you with the gift of hearts and lives transformed when we celebrate your birth at Christmas.

Gospel of St Matthew (24:37-44)

Jesus said to his disciples: '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 all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, 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.'

Gospel Reflection

By Bishop Danny Meagher

As a boy I used to sail competitively at Botany Bay. We would scour the water, the other boats, the sky, even the airport - trying to catch the most favourable wind. We would look for the 'lifts' and try at all costs to avoid the 'knocks.' You would need to observe everything, concentrate intensely. All to win the race.

Competitive sailing is not just lolling about. Neither is the life of discipleship of Jesus Christ. We too have a race to run. We have a destination: the Kingdom of God. Our aim is to reach as far into the Kingdom as is possible, by God's grace, before we die.

The love of God poured into us - the Holy Spirit - is the wind. We have to stay awake - to concentrate, and to keep on the lookout for the movements of the Spirit.

Where do we find God's 'lifts'? Wherever we find an increase in love, peace, gentleness, courage and all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit spoken about in the

“We need to scour our lives and seek out the presence of God’s Spirit and remain there. Keep our sails full. Speed along to greater love, freedom and peace.”

Scriptures. We need to scour our lives and seek out the presence of God's Spirit and remain there. Keep our sails full. Speed along to greater love, freedom and peace.

Where do we find God's 'knocks'? Wherever we find discouragement, envy, factions, selfishness, anxiety. Again, the Scriptures are full of the signs contrary to the presence of God. We need to observe these movements in ourselves and others, and avoid them and keep avoiding them. If we keep getting knocked, we may never reach God's Kingdom.

Most of all, do we know that we have a destination and do we strive to reach God's Kingdom? Or are we just lolling about, as they did in Noah's day, allowing our hearts to be coarsened by the cares of life?

We have one life to live, one race to run. Let's be urgent. Stay awake! By God's grace, let's set our sails, and keep adjusting them, to speed into God's Kingdom.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your unceasing love for us. Help us to overcome the 'knocks' of life, and to rely on the grace of the 'lifts' that you offer. By the Power of the Holy Spirit, may we strive toward your Kingdom as we prepare for the coming of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. In which moments of my life can I recognise the movement of the Spirit guiding me on the path to holiness?
3. In which relationship or situation is God inviting me to witness to the urgency of 'setting our sails' toward Christ?

Saying Grace by Cornelis Pietersz Bega, 1663. Credit: Europeana/Unsplash, Public Domain



Second Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we surrender this moment to you now as we meditate on your Word in this Gospel passage and reflection.. May this time of preparation during the Season of Advent bring us closer to you, so that we may present you with the gift of hearts and lives transformed when we celebrate your birth at Christmas.

Gospel of St Matthew (3:1-12)

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said:

A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.

This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt 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 fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, 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 the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.'

Gospel Reflection

By Tania Rimac

In the days and weeks leading up to Christmas we busy ourselves with cleaning our homes, baking cakes and buying and wrapping presents. There is a flurry of activity to ensure everything is ready before the special day arrives.

In this Gospel reading, John the Baptist tells the people of his time - and us today - that the "Kingdom of God is close at hand." There is a sense of urgency in his message and he implores us and reminds us that we are to "prepare a way for the Lord." During Advent we do this by intentionally preparing our hearts to fully receive Jesus at Christmas.

The preparation that we need, and of which John the Baptist preaches, is that of repentance. This is the gift that is given to each of us and that we must run to with a sense of urgency.

Many of us in the world today carry burdens and past hurts that can create wounds,

leading to hearts that over time become hardened. We have the answer to what can heal these wounds, the answer to what can fortify us against challenges and gives us the grace we need to live in a complex world. It is Jesus in the Sacrament of Reconciliation!

"There is immense power in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we approach it with sincerity of heart and give all our sins and hurt to God."

There is immense power in the Sacrament of Reconciliation when we approach it with sincerity of heart and give all our sins and hurt to God. He gives us the opportunity to empty ourselves, and in this emptying, He creates in us a clean heart. Our hearts are softened and we are able to fully receive Jesus. We cannot do this alone; we must run

to the Sacrament and be ready for Jesus' coming!

When Christ the Babe arrives this Christmas, will He find your heart properly prepared to receive Him? Will your heart be a soft place for Him to lay?



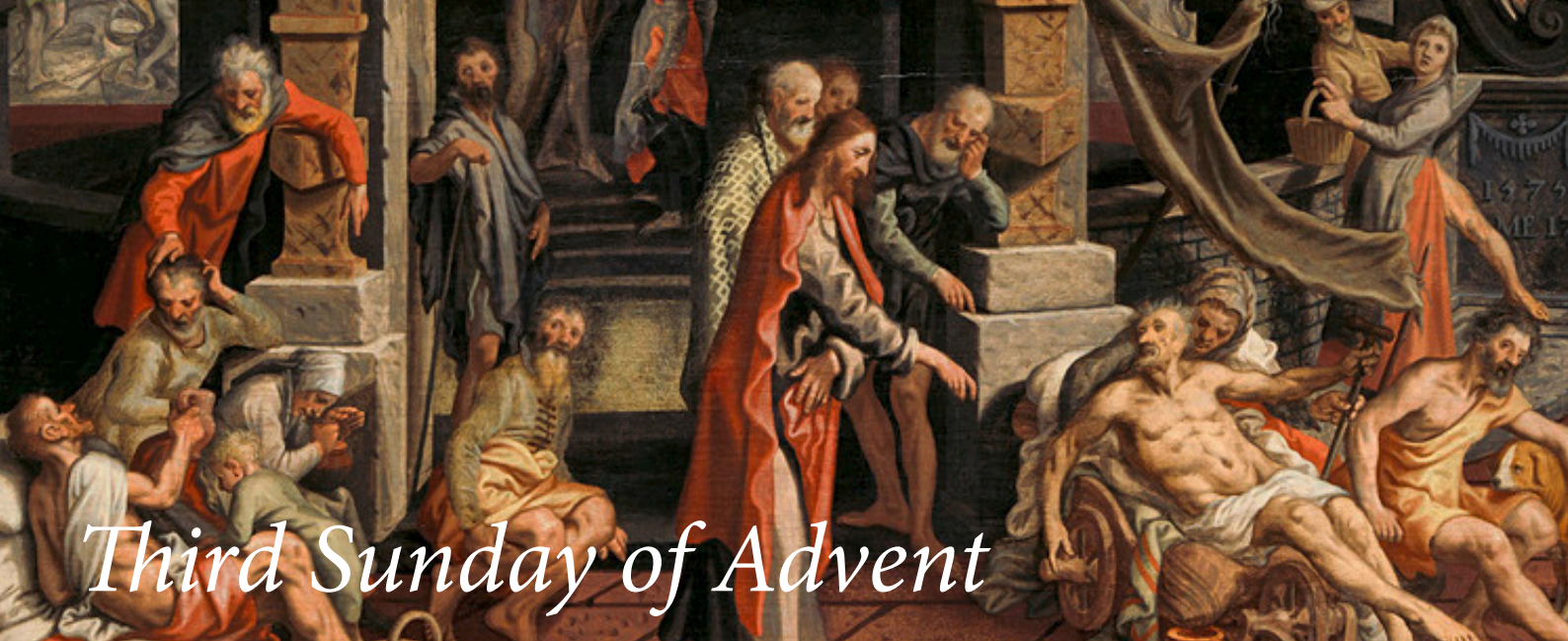
Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your unceasing love for us. Grant us the grace of true repentance for our sins. By the power of the Holy Spirit, transform and purify us so that our hearts may be worthy mangers to welcome the newborn Babe, your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. Do I truly repent of my sins? What do I need to do to ensure that I avail myself of the Sacrament of Reconciliation this Advent?
3. How can I help others to prepare their hearts to welcome Jesus at Christmas?

Saint John the Baptist and the Pharisees by James Tissot, 1886-1894. Credit: Brooklyn Museum, 00.159.47_PS2.jpg



Third Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we surrender this moment to you now as we meditate on your Word in this Gospel passage and reflection. May this time of preparation during the Season of Advent bring us closer to you, so that we may present you with the gift of hearts and lives transformed when we celebrate your birth at Christmas.

Gospel of St Luke (11:2-11)

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, 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 before you; he will prepare your way before you.

'I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

Gospel Reflection

By Sr Mary Julian Ekman RSM

In this passage of St Matthew's Gospel, we contemplate John the Baptist in the prison of King Herod Antipas. John's whole life has been one of earnestly preaching repentance and preparation for the Kingdom to come. He has heard of Jesus' deeds of preaching and healing, but they are not the same as the works of judgement and punishment that he had preached as part of the Messianic mission. The 'disconnect' between his expectations of the Messiah's identity and the reality of who Jesus is leads John to doubt whether Jesus is in fact the Anointed One. Yet John, the ever humble and faithful herald, continues to remain focussed on God's promise of redemption and sends out messengers to ask Jesus: "Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?"

Sometimes we too experience a 'disconnect' when it comes to what we expect of Jesus and

"Yet John, the ever humble and faithful herald, continues to remain focussed on God's promise of redemption."

what we see happening in our own lives. At other times, situations can be out of our control or simply do not match our belief system so we become rattled and begin to doubt. What should we do in these moments?

This passage offers us a key. Jesus does not directly reply to John's question through the messengers but simply points to His deeds: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised to life, and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor. Jesus knows that John has a different concept of 'Messiah,' just as He knows that we can have different conceptions of who He is and how He acts. Based on what He has done, Jesus invites John to make an act of faith as to His identity: "Happy is the man who does not lose faith in me." Jesus invites us also to see His presence in our lives so we may come to a deeper understanding of who He really is.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your unceasing love for us. Strengthen us when we begin to doubt. By the power of the Holy Spirit, give us a deep and abiding faith so that we may see clearly in our lives, the presence of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. In which ways do I see the presence of Jesus in my daily life? Do I experience a 'disconnect'?
3. Who in my life could benefit from hearing about the joy and hope that I have from the presence of Jesus in my life?

The Healing of the Paralytic, Pool of Bethesda by Pieter Aertsen, 1575. Credit: Rijksmuseum/picryl.com, Public Domain



Fourth Sunday of Advent

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we surrender this moment to you now as we meditate on your Word in this Gospel passage and reflection. May this time of preparation during the Season of Advent bring us closer to you, so that we may present you with the gift of hearts and lives transformed when we celebrate your birth at Christmas.

Gospel of St Matthew (1:18-24)

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 a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when 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 the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet:

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, 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.

Gospel Reflection

By Dr Michael Casey

"Stay awake!" This is what we have to do to prepare for the coming of the Lord. Can you do this while you are asleep? In this Sunday's Gospel, Joseph learns what he has to do to prepare for the coming of the Lord while sleeping, in a dream.

We know nothing about how Joseph felt when he learnt that Mary was pregnant. His decision to spare Mary "publicity", however, shows us the kindness of a good man; one who wants to protect the woman he loves from the suffering that publicity would bring.

The kindness in Joseph's decision shows that he is "a man of honour", someone who wants to do what is right. It also shows us the nobility of someone who prays and ponders the ways of God, even when it is difficult to understand His purpose in the circumstances before us.

*"It also shows
us the nobility
of someone who
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purpose ..."*

God did not want Joseph to step aside from the new course that Mary's life had suddenly taken, but to step forward with her. So, the angel "appeared to him in a dream" to show him his part in preparing for the coming of the Lord; "to take Mary home as your wife" and

to be the earthly father of the child she had conceived through the Holy Spirit.

A prayer attributed to Saint Ambrose for the end of the day asks of the Lord: "May our hearts dream of you; May we perceive you in sleep." Our sleep can help us prepare for the coming of the Lord with more than simple rest, if, like Joseph, we ponder continually the ways of God when we are awake. We need

to stay awake – to be attentive to his call – so that even asleep we are alive to the Lord. Then, with the new day, we can rise to do His will, as Joseph did.



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your unceasing love for us. Help us to be attentive to your call. By the power of the Holy Spirit, may we ponder your ways and always do the will of your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. In which moments of my life have I experienced that the Holy Spirit was prompting me?
3. How can my witness encourage others to welcome Mary into their homes?

Scenes from the life of Christ on the ceiling: the dream of St Joseph, c. 13th Century. Credit: Marie-Lan Nguyen / Wikimedia Commons / CC-BY 2.5



Christmas

Opening Prayer

Loving Jesus, we surrender this moment to you now as we meditate on your Word in this Gospel passage and reflection. May this time of preparation during the Season of Advent bring us closer to you, so that we may present you with the gift of hearts and lives transformed when we celebrate your birth at Christmas.

Gospel of St Matthew (2:1-14)

Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census – the first – took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria, and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered together with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn.

In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turns to watch their flocks during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone round them. They were terrified, but the angel said, 'Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger.' And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing:

'Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favour'



Gospel Reflection

By Fr Benjamin Saliba

The latest census figures are in! Once upon a time, Joseph and Mary participated in Caesar Augustus' version of a census, and millennia later, Australia has done its own! When it comes to faith, fewer people are identifying as Catholic. Our lives have become mostly consumeristic, concerned with look and status, influenced by 'influencers', alternate forms of media and, on a deeper level, less concerned with living our faith daily due to a fear of offending others or being persecuted.

A life in Christ is the remedy to this attitude. Jesus' message to everyone was to leave everything and follow Him because He is "the Way, the Truth and the Life" (Jn 14:6). In a world of so much distraction how can we do this? We must all embrace a simplicity of life - a poverty of spirit and be prepared to receive what comes our way. We can do so in confidence knowing that whatever

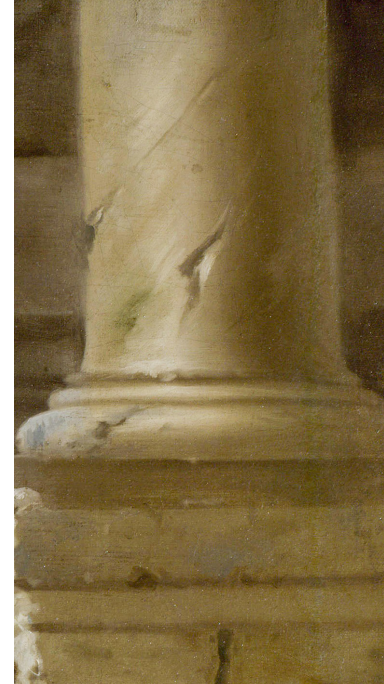
"We must all embrace a simplicity of life - a poverty of spirit and be prepared to receive what comes our way. We can do so in confidence knowing that ... 'if the world hates you, understand that it hated me first'"

happens, "if the world hates you, understand that it hated me first" (Jn 15:18). If we take as our guide what happened on that glorious night, we see a Babe in a manger; an impoverished setting, yet one that makes the heavens rejoice, "Glory to God in the

highest heaven and peace to men who enjoy his favour" (Lk 2:14).

As we welcome the birth of our Saviour let us always be thankful to our God who doesn't care about riches and status - let us work on what really matters - the heart with which He desires a relationship. In the words of St Leo the Great: "Christian, recognise your dignity,

and know that you share in God's own nature, do not return to your former base condition by sinning...Never forget that you have been rescued from the power of darkness and brought into the light of the Kingdom of God."



Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, we give you thanks and praise for your unceasing love for us. Give us the grace to put aside all distractions, worries and concerns at this time. By the power of the Holy Spirit, help us to continually embrace a life of poverty and simplicity so that we are always prepared to welcome Our Saviour, your Son, Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. Which word or phrase of the Gospel and the reflection spoke to me, and what might God be saying to me?
2. How can I organise my time on Christmas Day to ensure that I spend time alone with Jesus in prayer?
3. To whom can I share the joy of the Good News that Jesus has come among us?

The Adoration Of The Shepherds by The Le Nain Brothers, c. 1640. Credit: Gandalf's Gallery/Flickr, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

AN AID TO YOUR EXAMINATION OF CONSCIENCE

BY ARCHBISHOP ANTHONY FISHER OP

I am the Lord your God: you shall not put other gods before me.

Positive value: Reverence for God.

- What are my priorities in life? Do I put God first and love Him with all my heart or do I put something or someone before God?
- Do I pray daily?
- Do I receive the teachings of Christ and His Church with an open heart and profess them openly? Or have I resisted less convenient teachings or denied them so as to get along?
- Do I receive Holy Communion often (at least annually in Eastertide), and prepare well for this? Or have I gone to Communion thoughtlessly, ungratefully or without first confessing grave sins?
- Do I go to Confession whenever I have committed a serious sin and am I honest when I go to Confession?
- Have I engaged in any occult, satanic or superstitious practices?
- Have I avoided activities that I know can be occasions of sin for me?

You shall not take God's name in vain.

Positive value: Respect for the things of God.

- Do I give due honour to God, His holy name, sacred ministers and sacred things?
- Have I used the name of the Lord (God, Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit...) disrespectfully, or the names of Mary or the saints?
- Have I deliberately harboured hatred or resentment towards God?
- Have I cursed or wished evil on another person?
- Have I lied under oath or violated a vow?

Keep the Lord's Day holy.

Positive value: Worship of God.

- Do I make worship of God a priority in my life?
- Is Sunday my day of rest, prayer and dedication to my family, avoiding unnecessary work and shopping?
- Have I missed Mass on Sunday without a serious reason? Or on a Holy Day of Obligation (in Australia: 25 December and 15 August)?
- Do I try to be there for all of Mass and try to be engaged with God, his Word and the sacred actions while I am there?
- Do I fast and do penance at the proper times (Ash Wednesday, Good Friday, other Fridays)? Do I fast for an hour before receiving Holy Communion?

Honour your father and mother.

Positive value: Reverence for family.

- Do I love, honour and respect my parents, other older people, and those in authority?
- Have I shown appropriate care for my spouse, children, siblings, other family?
- Have I neglected the aged, sick or lonely?
- Have I tried to ensure that my children receive the sacraments, are given good religious instruction and practice their faith?

You shall not kill.

Positive value: Reverence for life.

- Do I uphold the dignity of every person?
- Do I love others appropriately and forgive those who hurt me? Or do I harbour hatred, grudges or prejudices?
- Have I deliberately harmed someone, physically, emotionally, or in reputation?
- Do I care for my own physical, emotional, and spiritual health?
- Have I abused alcohol or drugs or driven 'under the influence'? Do I act recklessly?
- Have I had an abortion or helped someone else to have one?

VI You shall not commit adultery.

Positive value: Reverence for sex and the body.

- Do I reverence my own body and have I been faithful to my state in life (married, vowed, single)?
- Am I a flirt? Have I engaged in immodest or sexually inappropriate behaviour?
- Do I honour my own marriage / family and support others in their family life?
- Have I committed sexual acts outside of marriage?
- Have I used bad language or told impure jokes?
- Have I used or encouraged others to use contraception or sterilisation?
- Have I viewed pornographic magazines, film or websites?

VII You shall not steal.

Positive value: Reverence for earthly goods.

- Do I honour the goods of the earth and of other people and try to contribute to the improvement of this world?
- Do I share with those in need, giving generously to charities and contributing to the material needs of the Church?
- Have I stolen, pirated or damaged other people's property?
- Have I cheated someone or failed to make just restitution?
- Do I gamble excessively or spend wastefully?
- Do I act justly with respect to my employer, employees and in my tax affairs?

VIII You shall not bear false witness against your neighbour.

Positive value: Reverence for truth.

- Do I always seek to know and speak and live by the truth? Or have I lied, exaggerated or sworn falsely?
- Do I gossip or reveal confidences without good reason?
- Have I damaged someone's good name or failed to defend those unjustly criticised?
- Have I plagiarised or been academically dishonest?

IX You shall not covet your neighbour's wife or people.

Positive value: Reverence for persons.

- Do I reverence other people's bodies and state in life?
- Do I guard my senses, imagination and memory? Or have I wilfully lusted after another person or entertained impure thoughts?
- Am I envious of the abilities, talents, beauty, friendships or success of others?
- Do I ridicule, humiliate or manipulate others?
- Do I encourage others to live good lives? Or have I encouraged them to engage in a sin or wrongly assisted them in doing so?

X You shall not covet your neighbour's goods.

Positive value: Reverence for higher things.

- Do I put the higher things first in my life or am I materialistic and part of the consumer culture?
- Am I excessively attached to material goods or envious of what others have?
- Do I show respect for the earth? Or do I unnecessarily damage the ecology?
- Have I desired or planned to steal, destroy or damage the property of another?
- Do I trust God to provide or fail to be grateful when He does?

"Merciful
and gracious
is the Lord,
slow to anger,
abounding in
mercy."
(Ps 103:8)



Three Comings of the Lord

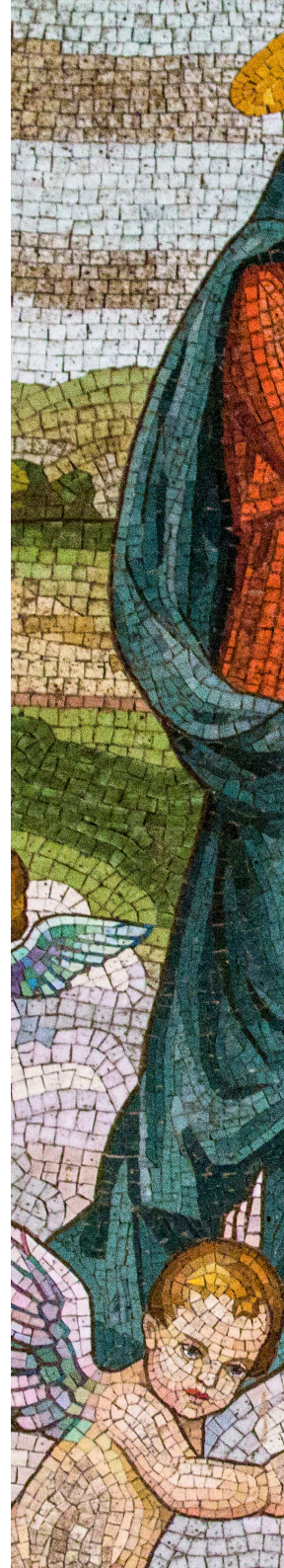
Advent prepares us for the coming of Christ. St Bernard of Clairvaux explains that there are three comings. The first coming we celebrate at Christmas, when Jesus was born into the world. The second is when He will come again at the end of time. The third coming is between these two, where Christ is among us, particularly in His word and the Sacraments. This Season of Advent helps us to prepare, not just for the first, but for all three comings of Christ.

Homily by St Bernard of Clairvaux

“We know that the coming of the Lord is threefold: the third coming is between the other two and it is not visible in the way they are. At his first coming the Lord was seen on earth and lived among men, who saw him and hated him. At his last coming All flesh shall see the salvation of our God, and They shall look on him whom they have pierced. In the middle, the hidden coming, only the chosen see him, and they see him within themselves; and so their souls are saved. The first coming was in flesh and weakness, the middle coming is in spirit and power, and the final coming will be in glory and majesty.

This middle coming is like a road that leads from the first coming to the last. At the first, Christ was our redemption; at the last, he will become manifest as our life; but in this middle way he is our rest and our consolation.

If you think that I am inventing what I am saying about the middle coming, listen to the Lord himself: If anyone loves me, he will keep my words, and the Father will love him, and we shall come to him. Elsewhere I have read: Whoever fears the Lord does good things – but I think that what was said about whoever loves him was more important: that whoever loves him will keep his words. Where are these words to be kept? In the heart certainly, as the Prophet says I have hidden your sayings in my heart so that I do not sin against you. Keep the word of God in that way: Blessed are those who keep it. Let it penetrate deep into the core of your soul and then flow out again in your feelings and the way you behave; because if you feed your soul well it will grow and rejoice. Do not forget to eat your bread, or your heart will dry up. Remember, and your soul will grow fat and sleek.





If you keep God's word like this, there is no doubt that it will keep you, for the Son will come to you with the Father: the great Prophet will come, who will renew Jerusalem, and he is the one who makes all things new. For this is what this coming will do: just as we have been shaped in the earthly image, so will we be shaped in the heavenly image. Just as the old Adam was poured into the whole man and took possession of him, so in turn will our whole humanity be taken over by Christ, who created all things, has redeemed all things, and will glorify all things."

St Bernard of Clairvaux, *Homily 5 on the Advent of the Lord*, cited in *The Divine Office Volume 1* (London: Collins, 2020), 61-62.

Mosaic detail of the Cistercian saint Bernard in Nunraw Abbey, Scotland. Credit: Lawrence OP, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP
invites you to

CHRISTMAS at the Cathedral

a festival evening at St Mary's

8 DECEMBER 2022

We invite our parish families and all people of goodwill across Sydney to come together at St Mary's Cathedral during Advent to prepare for the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ST MARY'S CATHEDRAL

4:00pm: Confessions available

5:30pm Mass

CATHEDRAL SQUARE

7:00pm: Live Entertainment

Pop-up shops

Food Stalls

Activities for the kids

8:00pm Christmas display official launch
by Archbishop Anthony Fisher OP

10:30pm Cathedral and Crypt closes

Christmas at The Cathedral runs nightly from 8 Dec to 25 Dec



SHARING THE GIFT OF FAITH DURING ADVENT

While our relationship with God is personal, it is not individual, for Our Lord calls us to live the Christian life in community and to welcome others into that community. We know that many people are thirsting to know God, and to be part of a community, but some may not be ready to come to a liturgy or an event held inside the church. As a parish, consider how you might not only celebrate Jesus's birth but also welcome your local community to share in these joyful events. Here are some ideas:

1. Christmas cards

Gather a team of parishioners to write Christmas cards for people in the local community. Greetings can be very simple, for example: "Merry Christmas from the parish of [name]. We are praying for you, and all of your needs. May you and your loved-ones receive the peace and joy of the newborn Jesus as we celebrate His birth at Christmas."

2. Christmas Invitation Leaflet

Create a flyer inviting all to your church this Christmas; include Mass times, Confession times, and any events or activities open to the community.

3. Letterbox Drop or Doorknock

Coordinate teams of parishioners to deliver Christmas cards and/or invitation leaflets to every home and business within your parish, either in the form of a letterbox drop or a personal visit door-to-door.

4. Reflection Night

Organise a reflection night in the Church, where all are welcome to attend. This could be a Holy Hour with simple prayers, reflective music and moments of silence. You can provide an opportunity for people to write their prayer intentions and place them in a crib in front of the altar, and then offer these intentions at one of the Christmas Masses. It is also a wonderful occasion to offer the Sacrament of Penance, and prayer teams for those who need the support of intercessory prayer.

5. Christmas Carols

Coming together to sing carols in a public park, shopping centre or public square, is a wonderful way of bringing parishioners together, and of creating an informal occasion to meet the broader community. Bring extra copies of the songs for passers-by who would like to join in. Invite people to write down a prayer intention, which they can place in a box or on a Christmas tree, and then offer these at one of the Christmas Masses. It is also a great opportunity to hand out invitational leaflets (see point 3).

6. Christmas BBQ

Host a Christmas party or BBQ, and invite the whole neighbourhood. This is a great way for the parish family to enjoy each other's company and welcome those who have no connection with the church. A parish party is a great way of getting to know the locals, and of showing true Christian hospitality!



*Adoration of the
Shepherds* by Philippe
de Champaigne.
Credit: Lawrence OP/
CC BY-NC-ND 2.0



O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, O come, Thou Lord of Might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law,
In cloud, and majesty, and awe.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Dayspring, come and cheer
Our spirits by Thine advent here;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Key of David, come,
And open wide our heavenly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,
And order all things, far and nigh;
To us the path of knowledge show,
And cause us in her ways to go.
Rejoice, rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

A Prayer for Renewal



lessed are you, Father,
who, in your infinite love
sent us your only-begotten Son, Jesus Christ,
that we may have life, and have it in abundance.

By the power of the Holy Spirit,
renew our Eucharistic communities.

May they be places of encounter
with the living Christ,
centres of evangelisation and outreach
to our community in love and mercy.

Grant us the gifts of faith, hope and love
to be faithful disciples of Jesus and
radiant witnesses to the people of Sydney.

Our Lady, Help of Christians. *Pray for us!*

Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelisation. *Pray for us!*

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop. *Pray for us!*



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