

SCRIPTURE FOR REFLECTION
AND
INTENTIONS FOR PRAYER



December 2024

Liturgical Calendar – Advent, Christmas

St Francis Xavier, St Nicholas, St Ambrose,
Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary [Solemnity],
St Lucy, St John of the Cross,
The Nativity of the Lord (Christmas) [Solemnity]
St Stephen [Feast], St John the Evangelist [Feast],
The Holy Innocents [Feast], St Thomas of Canterbury [Feast],
The Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph

**The month of December is dedicated to the
Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.**

“Advent has a twofold character: it is a time of preparation for the Solemnities of Christmas, in which the First Coming of the Son of God to humanity is remembered, and also a time when, by remembrance of this, minds and hearts are led to look forward to Christ’s Second Coming at the end of time. For these two reasons, Advent is a period of devout and expectant delight.

Advent is also a season for reflecting on the role of Mary the Mother of God in our redemption.

Each Gospel reading has a distinctive theme: the Lord’s coming at the end of time (First Sunday of Advent), John the Baptist (Second and Third Sundays), and the events that prepared immediately for the Lord’s birth (Fourth Sunday).

The Old Testament readings are prophecies about the Messiah and the Messianic age, especially from Isaiah.

The readings from an apostle serve as exhortations and as proclamations, in keeping with the different themes of Advent.

(Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 39
Introduction to the Lectionary, 93)

After the annual celebration of the Paschal Mystery, the Church has no more ancient custom than celebrating the memorial of the Nativity of the Lord and of his first manifestations (Epiphany, Baptism, wedding at Cana), and this takes place in Christmas Time.

(Universal Norms on the Liturgical Year and the Calendar, 32)

For in the mystery of the Word made flesh
a new light of your glory has shone upon the eyes of our mind,
so that, as we recognise in him God made visible,
we may be caught up through him in love of things invisible.

(Preface I of the Nativity of the Lord - Christ the Light)



For wonderful reflections on the Sunday readings, for parishes, schools, parents and families, by world-renowned Scripture scholar Dom Henry Wansbrough OSB, see The Wednesday Word website: www.wednesdayword.org

Scripture

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I am going to fulfil the promise I made to the House of Israel and the House of Judah:

‘In those days and at that time, I will make a virtuous Branch grow for David, who shall practise honesty and integrity in the land.

In those days Judah shall be saved and Israel shall dwell in confidence.

And this is the name the city will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.’

Jeremiah 33:14-16

May the Lord be generous in increasing your love, and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints.

Finally, brothers, we urge you and appeal to you in the Lord Jesus to make more and more progress in the kind of life that you are meant to live: the life that God wants, as you learnt from us, and as you are already living it. You have not forgotten the instructions we gave you on the authority of the Lord Jesus.

1 Thessalonians 3:12 - 4:2

Jesus said to his disciples: ‘There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

‘Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.’

Luke 21:25-28. 34-36

In the days to come the mountain of the Temple of the Lord shall tower above the mountains and be lifted higher than the hills. All the nations will stream to it, peoples without number will come to it; and they will say: 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the Temple of the God of Jacob that he may teach us his ways so that we may walk in his paths; since the Law will go out from Zion, and the oracle of the Lord from Jerusalem.'

He will wield authority over the nations and adjudicate between many peoples; these will hammer their swords into ploughshares, their spears into sickles. Nation will not lift sword against nation, there will be no more training for war. O House of Jacob, come, let us walk in the light of the Lord.

Isaiah 2:1-5

When Jesus 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.' 'I will come myself and cure him' said Jesus. 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, 'I tell you solemnly, nowhere in Israel have I found faith like this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven.'

Matthew 8:5-11

I do not boast of preaching the gospel, since it is a duty which has been laid on me; I should be punished if I did not preach it! If I had chosen this work myself, I might have been paid for it, but as I have not, it is a responsibility which has been put into my hands. Do you know what my reward is? It is this: in my preaching, to be able to offer the Good News free, and not insist on the rights which the gospel gives me.

So though I am not a slave of any man I have made myself the slave of everyone so as to win as many as I could. For the weak I made myself weak: I made myself all things to all men in order to save some at any cost; and I still do this, for the sake of the gospel, to have a share in its blessings.

1 Corinthians 9:16-19. 22-23

The Lord says this:

In a short time, a very short time,
shall not Lebanon become fertile land and fertile land turn into forest?
The deaf, that day, will hear the words of a book
and, after shadow and darkness, the eyes of the blind will see.

But the lowly will rejoice in the Lord even more
and the poorest exult in the Holy One of Israel;
for tyrants shall be no more, and scoffers vanish,
and all be destroyed who are disposed to do evil:
those who gossip to incriminate others,
those who try at the gate to trip the arbitrator
and get the upright man's case dismissed for groundless reasons.

Therefore the Lord speaks,
the God of the House of Jacob, Abraham's redeemer:
No longer shall Jacob be ashamed, no more shall his face grow pale,
for he shall see what my hands have done in his midst,
he shall hold my name holy.
They will hallow the Holy One of Jacob, stand in awe of the God of Israel.
Erring spirits will learn wisdom and murmurers accept instruction.

Isaiah 29:17-24

Thus says the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel:

People of Zion, you will live in Jerusalem and weep no more. He will be gracious to you when he hears your cry; when he hears he will answer. When the Lord has given you the bread of suffering and the water of distress, he who is your teacher will hide no longer, and you will see your teacher with your own eyes. Whether you turn to right or left, your ears will hear these words behind you, 'This is the way, follow it.' He will send rain for the seed you sow in the ground, and the bread that the ground provides will be rich and nourishing. Your cattle will graze, that day, in wide pastures. Oxen and donkeys that till the ground will eat a salted fodder, winnowed with shovel and fork. On every lofty mountain, on every high hill there will be streams and watercourses, on the day of the great slaughter when the strongholds fall. Then moonlight will be bright as sunlight and sunlight itself be seven times brighter – like the light of seven days in one – on the day the Lord dresses the wound of his people and heals the bruises his blows have left.

Isaiah 30:19-21. 23-26



Every time I pray for all of you, I pray with joy, remembering how you have helped to spread the Good News from the day you first heard it right up to the present. I am quite certain that the One who began this good work in you will see that it is finished when the Day of Christ Jesus comes; and God knows how much I miss you all, loving you as Christ Jesus loves you. My prayer is that your love for each other may increase more and more and never stop improving your knowledge and deepening your perception so that you can always recognise what is best. This will help you to become pure and blameless, and prepare you for the Day of Christ, when you will reach the perfect goodness which Jesus Christ produces in us for the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:4-6. 8-11

Jerusalem, take off your dress of sorrow and distress,
put on the beauty of the glory of God for ever,
wrap the cloak of the integrity of God around you,
put the diadem of the glory of the Eternal on your head:
since God means to show your splendour to every nation under heaven,
since the name God gives you for ever will be,
'Peace through integrity, and honour through devotedness.'
Arise, Jerusalem, stand on the heights and turn your eyes to the east:
see your sons reassembled from west and east
at the command of the Holy One, jubilant that God has remembered them.
Though they left you on foot, with enemies for an escort,
now God brings them back to you like royal princes carried back in glory.
For God has decreed the flattening of each high mountain, of the everlasting hills,
the filling of the valleys to make the ground level
so that Israel can walk in safety under the glory of God.
And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade for Israel at the command of God;
for God will guide Israel in joy by the light of his glory
with his mercy and integrity for escort.

Baruch 5:1-9

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas the word of God came to John son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight.
Every valley will be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low,
winding ways will be straightened and rough roads made smooth.
And all mankind shall see the salvation of God.

Luke 3:1-6

'Console my people, console them', says your God.
'Speak to the heart of Jerusalem and call to her
that her time of service is ended, that her sin is atoned for,
that she has received from the hand of the Lord double punishment for all her crimes.'

A voice cries, 'Prepare in the wilderness a way for the Lord.
Make a straight highway for our God across the desert.
Let every valley be filled in, every mountain and hill be laid low.
Let every cliff become a plain, and the ridges a valley;
then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed and all mankind shall see it;
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

A voice commands, 'Cry!' and I answered, 'What shall I cry?'"
– 'All flesh is grass and its beauty like the wild flower's.
The grass withers, the flower fades when the breath of the Lord blows on them.
The grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God remains for ever.'

Go up on a high mountain, joyful messenger to Zion.
Shout with a loud voice, joyful messenger to Jerusalem.
Shout without fear, say to the towns of Judah, 'Here is your God.'
Here is the Lord coming with power, his arm subduing all things to him.
The prize of his victory is with him, his trophies all go before him.
He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms,
holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes.

Isaiah 40:1-11

'To whom could you liken me and who could be my equal?' says the Holy One.
Lift your eyes and look. Who made these stars
if not he who drills them like an army, calling each one by name?
So mighty is his power, so great his strength, that not one fails to answer.
How can you say, Jacob, how can you insist, Israel,
'My destiny is hidden from the Lord, my rights are ignored by my God'?
Did you not know? Had you not heard?
The Lord is an everlasting God, he created the boundaries of the earth.
He does not grow tired or weary, his understanding is beyond fathoming.
He gives strength to the wearied, he strengthens the powerless.
Young men may grow tired and weary, youths may stumble,
but those who hope in the Lord renew their strength, they put out wings like eagles.
They run and do not grow weary, walk and never tire.

Isaiah 40:25-31

Jesus told this parable to his disciples: 'The kingdom of heaven will be like this: Ten bridesmaids took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were sensible: the foolish ones did take their lamps, but they brought no oil, whereas the sensible ones took flasks of oil as well as their lamps. The bridegroom was late, and they all grew drowsy and fell asleep. But at midnight there was a cry, "The bridegroom is here! Go out and meet him." At this, all those bridesmaids woke up and trimmed their lamps, and the foolish ones said to the sensible ones, "Give us some of your oil: our lamps are going out." But they replied, "There may not be enough for us and for you; you had better go to those who sell it and buy some for yourselves." They had gone off to buy it when the bridegroom arrived. Those who were ready went in with him to the wedding hall and the door was closed. The other bridesmaids arrived later. "Lord, Lord," they said "open the door for us." But he replied, "I tell you solemnly, I do not know you." So stay awake, because you do not know either the day or the hour.'

Matthew 25:1-13

Brothers, when I came to you, it was not with any show of oratory or philosophy, but simply to tell you what God had guaranteed. During my stay with you, the only knowledge I claimed to have was about Jesus, and only about him as the crucified Christ. Far from relying on any power of my own, I came among you in great 'fear and trembling' and in my speeches and the sermons that I gave, there were none of the arguments that belong to philosophy; only a demonstration of the power of the Spirit. And I did this so that your faith should not depend on human philosophy but on the power of God.

But still we have a wisdom to offer those who have reached maturity: not a philosophy of our age, it is true, still less of the masters of our age, which are coming to their end. The hidden wisdom of God which we teach in our mysteries is the wisdom that God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began. It is a wisdom that none of the masters of this age have ever known, or they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory; we teach what scripture calls: the things that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, things beyond the mind of man, all that God has prepared for those who love him.

These are the very things that God has revealed to us through the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:1-10

Shout for joy, daughter of Zion, Israel, shout aloud!
Rejoice, exult with all your heart, daughter of Jerusalem!
The Lord has repealed your sentence; he has driven your enemies away.
The Lord, the king of Israel, is in your midst; you have no more evil to fear.
When that day comes, word will come to Jerusalem:
Zion, have no fear, do not let your hands fall limp.
The Lord your God is in your midst, a victorious warrior.
He will exult with joy over you, he will renew you by his love;
he will dance with shouts of joy for you as on a day of festival.

Zephaniah 3:14-18

I want you to be happy, always happy in the Lord; I repeat, what I want is your happiness. Let your tolerance be evident to everyone: the Lord is very near.

There is no need to worry; but if there is anything you need, pray for it, asking God for it with prayer and thanksgiving, and that peace of God, which is so much greater than we can understand, will guard your hearts and your thoughts, in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:4-7

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

Luke 3:15-18

See, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when I will raise a virtuous Branch for David, who will reign as true king and be wise, practising honesty and integrity in the land. In his days Judah will be saved and Israel dwell in confidence. And this is the name he will be called: The-Lord-our-integrity.

So, then, the days are coming – it is the Lord who speaks – when people will no longer say, "As the Lord lives who brought the sons of Israel out of the land of Egypt!" but, "As the Lord lives who led back and brought home the descendants of the House of Israel out of the land of the North and from all the countries to which he had dispersed them, to live on their own soil."

Jeremiah 23:5-8

The Lord says this:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, the least of the clans of Judah,
out of you will be born for me the one who is to rule over Israel;
his origin goes back to the distant past, to the days of old.

The Lord is therefore going to abandon them
till the time when she who is to give birth gives birth.

Then the remnant of his brothers will come back to the sons of Israel.

He will stand and feed his flock with the power of the Lord,
with the majesty of the name of his God.

They will live secure,
for from then on he will extend his power to the ends of the land.

He himself will be peace.

Micah 5:1-4

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, so highly favoured! 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. Listen! You are to conceive 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 am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered '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. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

Luke 1:26-38

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.

Matthew 1:18-24

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now 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? For 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.'

Luke 1:39-45

John the Baptist's 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 come to their rescue
and he has raised up for us a power for salvation in the House of his servant David,
even 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 who hate us.
Thus he shows mercy to our ancestors, thus he remembers his holy covenant
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 virtue 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 the way for him,
to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins;
this by the tender mercy of our God
who from on high will bring the rising Sun to visit us,
to give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

Luke 1:67-79

The people that walked in darkness has seen a great light;
on those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone.
You have made their gladness greater, you have made their joy increase;
they rejoice in your presence as men rejoice at harvest time,
as men are happy when they are dividing the spoils.

For the yoke that was weighing on him, the bar across his shoulders,
the rod of his oppressor, these you break as on the day of Midian.

For all the footgear of battle, every cloak rolled in blood,
is burnt, and consumed by fire.

For there is a child born for us, a son given to us
and dominion is laid on his shoulders;
and this is the name they give him:
Wonder-Counsellor, Mighty-God, Eternal-Father, Prince-of-Peace.
Wide is his dominion in a peace that has no end,
for the throne of David and for his royal power,
which he establishes and makes secure in justice and integrity.
From this time onwards and for ever,
the jealous love of the Lord of Hosts will do this.

Isaiah 9:1-7

God's grace has been revealed, and it has made salvation possible for the whole human race and taught us that what we have to do is to give up everything that does not lead to God, and all our worldly ambitions; we must be self-restrained and live good and religious lives here in this present world, while we are waiting in hope for the blessing which will come with the Appearing of the glory of our great God and saviour Christ Jesus. He sacrificed himself for us in order to set us free from all wickedness and to purify a people so that it could be his very own and would have no ambition except to do good.

Titus 2:11-14

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.'

Now when the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, 'Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us.' So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger. When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart. And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told.

Luke 2:1-20



How beautiful on the mountains, are the feet of one who brings good news,
who heralds peace, brings happiness, proclaims salvation,
and tells Zion, 'Your God is king!'

Listen! Your watchmen raise their voices, they shout for joy together,
for they see the Lord face to face, as he returns to Zion.

Break into shouts of joy together, you ruins of Jerusalem;
for the Lord is consoling his people, redeeming Jerusalem.

The Lord bares his holy arm in the sight of all the nations,
and all the ends of the earth shall see the salvation of our God.

Isaiah 52:7-10

In the beginning was the Word:

and the Word was with God and the Word was God.

He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things came to be, not one thing had its being but through him.

All that came to be had life in him and that life was the light of men,
a light that shines in the dark, a light that darkness could not overpower.

A man came, sent by God. His name was John.

He came as a witness, as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light, only a witness to speak for the light.

The Word was the true light that enlightens all men; and he was coming into the world.

He was in the world that had its being through him, and the world did not know him.

He came to his own domain and his own people did not accept him.

But to all who did accept him he gave power to become children of God,
to all who believe in the name of him

who was born not out of human stock or urge of the flesh or will of man
but of God himself.

The Word was made flesh, he lived among us, and we saw his glory,
the glory that is his as the only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth.

John appears as his witness. He proclaims: 'This is the one of whom I said:
He who comes after me ranks before me because he existed before me.'

Indeed, from his fullness we have, all of us, received – yes, grace in return for grace,
since, though the Law was given through Moses,
grace and truth have come through Jesus Christ.

No one has ever seen God;

it is the only Son, who is nearest to the Father's heart, who has made him known.

John 1:1-18

Something which has existed since the beginning,
that we have heard, and we have seen with our own eyes;
that we have watched and touched with our hands:
the Word, who is life – this is our subject.
That life was made visible: we saw it and we are giving our testimony,
telling you of the eternal life which was with the Father and has been made visible to us.
What we have seen and heard we are telling you
so that you too may be in union with us,
as we are in union with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ.
We are writing this to you to make our own joy complete.

1 John 1:1-4

Pope Francis speaks about the season of Advent

Today, the First Sunday of Advent, a new liturgical year begins. In it, the Church marks the passage of time with the celebration of the main events in Jesus' life and the story of salvation. In so doing, as Mother, she illuminates the path of our existence, supports us in our daily affairs and guides us towards the final encounter with Christ. Today's liturgy invites us to live the first "important Season", which is that of Advent, the first of the liturgical year, Advent, which prepares us for Christmas, and is therefore a time of expectation, it is a time of hope. Expectation and hope.

Saint Paul (cf. 1 Cor 1:3-9) indicates the object of our expectation. What is it? The "revealing of our Lord" (v. 7). The Apostle invites the Christians of Corinth, and we too, to focus our attention on the encounter with Jesus. For a Christian the most important thing is the continuous encounter with the Lord, being with the Lord. And in this way, accustomed to staying with the Lord of life, we prepare ourselves for the encounter, for being with the Lord for eternity. And this definitive encounter will come at the end of the world. However, the Lord comes every day, so that, with his grace, we might accomplish good in our own lives and in the lives of others. Our God is a God-who-comes, do not forget this: God is a God who comes, who continually comes. He does not disappoint our expectation. The Lord never disappoints. He will perhaps make us wait, he will make us wait a few moments in the dark to allow our expectation to ripen, but he never disappoints. The Lord always comes, He is always by our side. At times he does not make himself seen, but he always comes. He came at a precise moment in history and became man to take on our sins — the feast of the Nativity commemorates Jesus' first coming in the historical moment —; He will come at the end of times as universal judge;

He also comes a third time, in a third manner: He comes every day to visit his people, to visit every man and woman who receives him in the Word, in the Sacraments, in their brothers and sisters. Jesus, the Bible tells us, is at the door and knocks. Every day. He is at the door to our heart. He knocks. Do you know how to listen to the Lord who knocks, who has come today to visit you, who knocks at your heart restlessly, with an idea, with inspiration? He came to Bethlehem, he will come at the end of the world, but every day he comes to us. Be attentive, look at what you feel in your heart when the Lord knocks.

Advent is a continuous call to hope: it reminds us that God is present in history to lead it to its ultimate goal, to lead it to its fullness, which is the Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ. God is present in the history of humanity, He is the "God-with-us", God is not distant, he is always with us, to the extent that very often he knocks on the door to our heart. God walks beside us to support us. The Lord does not abandon us; He accompanies us through the events of our lives to help us discover the meaning of the journey the meaning of everyday life, to give us courage when we are under duress or suffering. In the midst of life's storms, God always extends his hand to us and frees us from threats. This is beautiful! In the book of Deuteronomy there is a very beautiful passage, in which the Prophet says to the people: "For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as the Lord our God is to us?". No-one, only we have this grace of having God close to us. We await God, we hope that he manifests himself, but he too hopes that we manifest ourselves to him!

May Mary Most Holy, woman of expectation, accompany our steps at the beginning of this new liturgical year, and help us to fulfil the task of Jesus' disciples, indicated by the Apostle Peter: And what is this task? To account for the hope that is in us (cf. 1 Pet 3:15).

Excerpts from Pope Francis' Angelus Reflection
29 November 2020 – First Sunday of Advent



Holy Year – Jubilee 2025 –Pilgrims of Hope

www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html

www.cbcew.org.uk/jubilee-2025/

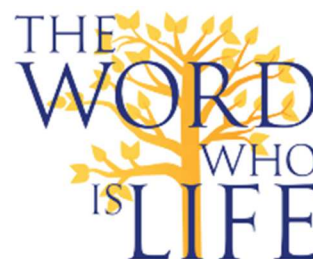
Cycle of Prayer (Seasons of Advent and Christmas)

- Migrants and refugees – especially on Migrants' Day (Tuesday 3 December)
- Expectant mothers – especially on the 4th Sunday of Advent (22 December)
- Pope Francis' intention for December: For pilgrims of hope
– that the Jubilee Year 2025 will strengthen our faith, helping us to recognise the Risen Christ in our daily lives, and that it may transform us into pilgrims of Christian hope.

Prayer for our Diocese

- Bishop Richard, and all the lay faithful, religious, deacons and priests in our parishes, schools, monasteries, convents and prisons, as we strive to build strong, lively schools of discipleship: communities where the Lord is known and loved; where the liturgy is experienced as an encounter with the wonder of heaven; where daily prayer is a natural part of life and where all are welcomed and their dignity as children of God always recognised. May we look to the future and, with a renewed openness to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, continue the Mission to which we have been called, in the circumstances of our time.
- We pray especially for all in the Eastbourne and St Leonards Deanery, as they meet, pray and discern the way forward, building a community of communities.
- As we prepare to welcome Christ, the Prince of Peace – who comes to us with the gift of peace for our hearts, our families, our communities, and for every people and nation – may we all be missionaries of peace, proclaiming the Good News of God's tender love for all, and honouring the dignity of every person.
- For all who will visit our churches during the Christmas season: that they will encounter Jesus and, through him, find joy, hope and peace in their lives.

Lord, the Word who is Life,
may all the people of our Diocese
grow in openness to the power of the Holy Spirit,
so that through a growth in understanding and courage,
and truly open to your call,
we may bear powerful witness to all around us,
for you are Lord for ever and ever. Amen.



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