



Reflection for the first week of Advent

On Sunday we celebrated the first Sunday of Advent and began the Church's New Year!

There are four Sundays in Advent and During these first weeks of the Liturgical Year we prepare for our celebration of the coming of Jesus into our world at Christmas.

Sometimes we can get carried away with putting up our Christmas Tree and Christmas decorations, buying Christmas gifts, organising and going to Christmas parties – it can all get a bit chaotic!

Amidst all the preparations we can forget that Advent is about a time of waiting, of expectation of preparing. The Advent wreath, with its four candles, three purple and one pink, is a reminder that we are marking the weeks and remembering the thousands of years that the people of the Old Testament awaited the coming of the Messiah.

Advent is a time of hope, and a time of looking at our lives and trying to find ways to become better people. We remember the past, but also try to allow Jesus into our lives in the present while we remember that Jesus promised us that he will come again so we await, and prepare for, his second coming.

As we light our first candle on our Advent wreath we pray that we may always be aware of the presence of God in our lives and that we will use the gifts that God has given each of us to bring light and love into the lives of others.



Reflection for the Second week of Advent

This week the second purple candle is lighting on our Advent wreath; the increasing light represents our growing expectation and hope and our increasing readiness to welcome Jesus into our world.

In the daily news we hear stories of homelessness, of war, of famine, of natural disasters ... stories of hopelessness. At this time of the year the days are short, the dark nights long, there is a sense of desolation all around.

In contrast, our towns are festooned with decorative lights brightening up these dark evenings and reminding us that we are preparing to celebrate Christmas! When we see these lights how often do we stop to reflect? Do the lights remind us that Jesus is the light of the world?

Advent is a time of preparation and expectation, a time to *'prepare the way of the Lord'*, a time of hope.

C.S. Lewis wrote:

"The birth of Christ is the central event in the history of the earth -- the very thing the whole story has been about."

As we move through these weeks of Advent let us try to take some time to reflect on our lives. Are there ways in which we can follow John the Baptist's lead, be a *'voice in the wilderness'* of the commercialism that surrounds these weeks? How can we *'prepare a way'* for the Lord in our own hearts?

We pray:

Father in heaven, increase our faith in the wonder of the birth of your Son, Jesus;
give us the strength to grow in love and to live in the light of Christ;
send your Holy Spirit to open our hearts, that we may joyfully welcome your Son into our lives each day, and to open our eyes that they may allow us to see and to respond to the needs of those around us

Amen.

Reflection for the Third week of Advent



We are now into the third week of Advent which began on Sunday - Gaudete Sunday – the Sunday on which we are reminded to ‘Rejoice’, to be joyful!

The readings reminded us to “Shout for joy” (Zephaniah 3:14) and to “... be happy, always happy in the Lord” (Philippians 4:4). The pink candle, which is lighting this week, reminds us that the Advent season is a time of joy because “The Lord is very near” (Philippians 4:5).

For Christians joy is not the result of expectations around the gifts we will receive at Christmas – it is something much deeper; it is rooted in knowing that we are loved unconditionally by God. As Christmas approaches we become more and more aware that Jesus has come among us and that it is because of his birth, his life, his death and his resurrection that we are a people of hope and joy.

In Sunday’s Gospel the people asked John the Baptist “What must we do?”. He replied “If anyone has two tunics they must share with the person who has none and the one with something to eat must do the same”. (Luke 3:10).

The Prayer of St. Frances says that “It is in giving that we receive”. It is in loving one another that we live the joy of the Gospel. Not in a shallow way, being ‘nice’ to each other, but by developing a genuine concern for others and a real commitment to making our world a better place – a world of peace, compassion and justice.

We pray that we may learn to rejoice in God’s love for each of us and to wholeheartedly share the gift of our joy with others.

We remember those for whom this season is a difficult time; may we always be generous, not only materially, but also with our time and our presence to others.

Help us, this Advent, to stand back from the commercialism that surrounds us; to take time to pause, to reflect - and to remember that Jesus birth is the reason for this season.