

ADVENT FAMILY PRAYER

Advent marks the beginning of the year of prayer for the Church. We pause at the beginning of this journey and pray to God whose holiness will be revealed in the year ahead.

The Scripture readings for Advent are a proclamation of hope, and a call to live Christian lives. They focus in a particularly moving way on the child of God whose birth will be celebrated at Christmas. They are full of paradox of power and weakness which is one of the abiding themes of the liturgy of this time.

The Gospels all point towards Jesus. He is the One who will come at the end of time, the One for whom John prepared the way and to whom he bore witness, the One whose coming was made known to Mary.

Throughout this season we reconnect with family and friends, building stronger the ties that make communities. Often it is joy that holds us together. But sometimes it is fear. Whatever the emotion, it makes us one. We celebrate our unity: We are one in apprehension, but one in hope. Jesus does not ignore our fears. He knows them. We hope that he who names our fears will also grant us peace.

Advent opens with the end of time, and it ends at a manger in Bethlehem. It takes us, whoever we are and wherever we are. It names our fears and brings us hope. It will not take away the forces that affright us, but it renders them irrelevant before the saving mission of Christ.

Advent Litany:

Lord Jesus, you are the light of the world,	come, Lord Jesus.
You are light in our darkness,	come, Lord Jesus.
Son of God, save us from our sins,	come, Lord Jesus.
Son of Mary, deepen our love,	come, Lord Jesus.
Bring hope into the lives of all people,	come, Lord Jesus.
Give your peace to all nations,	come, Lord Jesus.
Be the joy of all who love you,	come, Lord Jesus.
Bring unity among all who believe in you,	come, Lord Jesus.
Bless us as we gather here in your name,	come, Lord Jesus.
Lord, Jesus, stay with us always,	come, Lord Jesus.

1ST Sunday and week of Advent:

The story of Jesus the Redeemer has become the sacred story of *our* Christian tradition, a memory that we are pledged to keep alive until he comes again. We are between two times: between the first coming of Jesus and his second coming on the last day. We remember the first; we wait for the second, and today's Gospel tells us how to wait: we must wait together and stay awake to the times that we live in.

Prayer

God our maker,
whose name is "our Redeemer from of old":
Tear open the heavens and come down!

Keep us faithful to building your kingdom,
alert to your presence in those around us,
and blameless in our witness
until the dawning of the day of our Lord Jesus Christ,
who was, who is and who is to come,
your Son who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

2nd Sunday and week of Advent:

The Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke introduce us to the two great figures that stand at the beginning of the Christian story: Jesus and John the Baptist. It is the towering figure of John that introduces the adult Jesus in all the Gospels.

People respond to the revivalist preaching of John by confessing their sins to him and undergoing a baptism of repentance. To the word of God spoken through John, people give their own word to change their lives. It is a time of personal spiritual renewal, when they would aim themselves again to a life of fidelity to God.

Prayer:

For the church, that we may herald the glad tidings of God's coming to gather and comfort all people.

For the world, that all leaders may strive for peace based on justice.

For the oppressed, that the downtrodden may be lifted up and the difficulties of life eased.

For the Eucharistic community of our parish, that by leading lives of holiness, we may wait for the day of God and hasten its coming.

3rd Sunday and week of Advent:

Like John, we are asked to make way for the light. Advent calls on us to make what contribution we can. To look first at ourselves and work quietly on the darkness that hides within us – the selfishness, the unforgiveness, and the lack of love that keep the light of good news from so many people. On the larger social issues – like justice and peace – which require the witness of a caring community, we are challenged by the gospel to work *together*.

Prayer

God of peace,
whose word is good news to the oppressed,
healing for the brokenhearted
and freedom for all who are held bound,
gladden our hearts and fashion the earth
into a garden of righteousness and praise!

Sanctify us entirely, in spirit, soul and body,
for the coming of the One
who even now is among us,
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who was, who is and who is to come,
your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unit of the Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever.

4th Sunday and week of Advent:

In today's Gospel we celebrate the extravagant love of God who freely chose Mary to be the mother of his beloved Son. God's choice of Mary made her "full of grace".

Because of God's mysterious preference, because he has freely chosen to look on Mary in such a way, because he made her full of grace, all generations – as we today – call her blessed. For God graced Mary for a mission that was not for herself: her mission in the plan of God was to give Jesus to every generation of the human family.

Like Mary, we face God's choice of us. We are the result of God's choice rather than a mobile mistake. God has a role for each of us. He waits for our choice that puts our freedom at his service.

Prayer

For the people of God, the house the Lord is building:
May all who call on God's name grow in the obedience of faith.

For all the peoples of earth, one kingdom of God:
May all who love peace be sheltered from violence.

For those in doubt or fear, perplexed by life's mystery:
May their anxiety yield to trust in God's plan and purpose.

For those persons who await the birth of a child:
Like the Virgin Mary may they joyfully ponder God's power and goodness.

Christmas:

The Christmas story we hear each year is the same, but we are different. Our world is different. Our memories have grown, our hopes have been tested, our love has been called on in new ways. But no matter what changes we have undergone, what losses we have mourned, the Christmas story speaks to us again of new birth and the possibility of our own rebirth. It tells us that things can be different; it gives substance to our hope that new life is possible because of the birth of the Son of God.

Prayer

As your Son, in putting on our flesh,
chose to become our partner in weakness,
so may we, through the water of rebirth
and renewal by the Holy Spirit,
become partners with your Son
in the new life announced this morning,
the gospel we ponder in our hearts.