

A Day by Day Spiritual Journey Through Advent
With Deacon Chris

Second Sunday of Advent. Year A

Light a candle and make sure it is safe and don't leave unattended.

What Was and What is Still to Come

We read a lot of Isaiah during Advent. *The prophet paints some encouraging pictures and today is no exception. The lion and lamb at peace, the bear and cow grazing in the same field. This image can and perhaps does remind us of what Paradise (Eden) was like before the Fall. Since then there is enmity. But the coming of our Saviour will change that. (My thanks to Mr. Charnock of Our Lady's Catholic High School, Preston for giving these words in a discussion that we had together.).*

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Almighty and merciful God, may no earthly undertaking hinder those who set out in haste to meet your Son, but may our learning of heavenly wisdom gain us admittance to his company. Who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel: St. Matthew's Gospel Chapter 3 verses 1 to 12

Repent

Reflection: We hear the phrase *We are sorry* at railway stations, on the phone and many other places. How many are sincere in what they say? Precious few. Simply because they don't do anything about it. We are sorry for the delay. The cause of the delay is repeated many times over a year. Businesses take pride in how quickly they answer complaints. They don't do anything to fix the cause.

John the Baptist is having a real go at the authorities over their actions. He also puts himself in his own place. I am not worth to carry his sandals. I am not worth that you should come under my roof.

Your Own Time.

Rosary

When you are ready pray a decade of the rosary that is dedicated to your own intention.

Concluding Prayer.

Give us the strength to repent, to wipe the slate clean and to do our best to keep trying to be true to the Lord. Through Christ our Lord.

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Monday of the Second Week of Advent

The doctrine concerning the Immaculate Conception has been in existence since the seventh century in the East and ninth century in the West. By the time of the Council of Trent in the sixteenth century the teaching of this had become commonplace. It was not until December 8th, 1854 that Pope Pius IX declared it as dogma. There were some opponents to the doctrine because they said it detracted from the truth of her natural conception. Her parents Anne and Joachim are both saints and we have a church at Westby named after Mary's mother. Many hymns have been written in honour of our Lady and the words '*the one spotless womb wherein Jesus was lay*'. (O purest of creatures by Frederick William Faber) spring to mind. We have a lot to thank our Lady for because her 'Yes' opened the world to salvation.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Heavenly Father you chose Mary from the moment of her conception to be the mother of your Son. You kept her free from the harm of Original sin so that in time her son will free us from the bonds of sin and take us to his heavenly kingdom. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel

Luke Chapter 1 verses 26 to 38

We are very familiar with this passage but it is worth reading slowly and take in the detail. Mary is troubled. Her mind must have raced down many routes. Gabriel's words of comfort steadied her and she accepted.

Her example of believing, trusting and loving is there for everyone to follow.

Your Own Time.

Rosary. Let us offer this decade for all the people who are uncertain about their faith.

Concluding Prayer

Lord, you know us through and through and like some of the prophets you called us before we were born. Strengthen our resolve so that we can say 'Yes'. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Tuesday of the Second Week of Advent.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Heavenly Father, you create a picture where everything is 'just so'. We don't deserve what you give us. It is through your love that we are able to receive these gifts. Help us to return your love with our love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel

Matthew chapter 18 verses 12 to 14.

Have you watched the programme *'Our Yorkshire Farm'* with Amanda and Clive Owen. They have a farm at Ravensat which is in Swaledale. They have a mixed farm. Their sheep live out on the hills and are a sturdy breed. The care that they have for all their animals comes across and this care has been instilled in their nine children. The programme has shown the triumphs of farming and it has also shown the tragedies which they take seriously but philosophically.

Our gospel tells us about a man who has a hundred sheep and one strays away. It is amazing that he knows that one has gone off. I am sure the same applies to today's stockpeople. The man has a dilemma: does he go in search and risk more going astray or does he stay put with the ninety nine? Our Lord gives us an 'if'. If he finds the sheep the man will be more joyous over that than the rest staying put.

God doesn't want anybody to get lost or go astray. It is hard for us to imagine but when we think of people of notoriety we probably don't consider what God thinks. From this gospel it is plain to see that God wants us all to stay in the flock.

Your Own Time.

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Rosary. Let us offer this decade for all the people who work on the land. For some that is every day of the year..

Concluding Prayer

Lord, you are the Good Shepherd and you welcome back anyone who has gone astray. Help us to send a message that there will always be a welcome for those who come home. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

Wednesday of the Second Week of Advent

Light a candle and make sure it is safe and don't leave unattended.

Food for Thought

Have you got your Christmas food sorted out? Where are you going for your meal? Will it be something different? We take our time sorting out what we need to buy and when. Is there enough room in the freezer? Will the turkey fit in the oven? We have lots to think about. Food is vital for our existence and if we can do something to help others who are truly struggling to provide then how good it is to chip in (pun intended).

But hunger is something that happens every day of the year not just on 25th December or any other major faith festival.

We also have another hunger. A hunger for Christ, for the Blessed Eucharist that we need for our journey. Thankfully we are able to receive Christ at Mass.

And there is yet another hunger. One that we perhaps don't recognise but that is the word of the Lord. We can be fed by the scriptures. They feed our heart and our minds. At Mass we feast on the word as we hear it proclaimed from the Altar of the Word. Then we feast on Body and Blood of Christ that we receive from the Altar of Sacrifice.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Heavenly Father, you created everything that we can see. The sun and the moon and the stars are truly amazing but they are not to be subjected to any form of worship. You are the one true God who calls us to love with all that we have. We are to love our neighbour also. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Reading

Isaiah chapter 40 verses 25 to 31

The Jewish people are still in exile in Babylon but there is hope. The reading starts with a very simple question about who can we liken God to. Why has that question been asked? False gods have been made out of a vast array of objects. The sun, moon and stars for a start. Remember the golden calf. There are idols and statues and even people and the devil. None of them can bring true happiness. The devil will promise the earth and it will cost our soul if we take him up on it. At the end of the day all we will have is hell fire.

The prophet is saying that God knows every star by name. Simply because he made them and as it put in the reading he drills them like an army.

Your Own Time.

Rosary. Let us offer this decade for all the people who work on the land. For some that is every day of the year..

Concluding Prayer

Lord , you are the Word and the Sacrament which nourishes every time we receive them. Grant us the grace that will encourage us to come to you with an open heart to accept and believe that you are the Christ who has come into the world. Amen.

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Thursday of the Second Week of Advent

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Don't Forget to Say Thank You.

Do you like being taken for granted? I think the answer is 'No.' Rightly so, because none of us should be taken for granted and neither should we take anybody for granted. Good manners are an absolute delight, especially please and thank you. Our Lord liked to be thanked. Remember the ten lepers who were cured and only one came back to say 'thanks.' Our Lord still likes to be thanked.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Heavenly Father, you create a picture where everything is 'just so'. We don't deserve what you give us. It is through your love that we are able to receive these gifts. Help us to return your love with our love. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel

Matthew chapter 11 verses 11 to 15

John the Baptist plays a prominent part in the readings of Advent. Today we hear our Lord put John at the pinnacle of all prophets. There is none greater than he. But where is John? He is in prison. His preaching has riled Herod who wants him where he can do little harm, or so he thinks. Damage limitation is what we call it today.

People refer to Elijah and John the Baptist in the same breath. John would eventually give his life in the service of the Lord, who, in his turn, will give his life in the service of us.

Do we give our life in the service of the Lord?

Your Own Time.

Rosary. Let us offer this decade for all the people who are called or feel called to work on the missions. May they recognise the call that God makes on them.

Concluding Prayer

Lord, you call each one of us to give ourselves for you. Help us to work towards fulfilling that call. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Friday of the Second Week of Advent

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Self

Is it selfish to think about yourself? Now there's a question to set the mind running. We think about ourselves everyday. Am I going to get up, what am I going to wear, what should I have to eat, what am I doing today? All legitimate questions and not much chance for being selfish unless you take the last slice of bread or whatever. We have to love ourselves because if we

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don't then we have no chance of obeying what Jesus said about loving our neighbour as ourself.

The trouble starts to appear when we want everything for ourself and it doesn't matter the cost to other people. In this instance Greed starts to rear its ugly head. There is also the danger that we might claim everything as being done by us. Look at my work and see how superior it is to everybody else's. This is Pride starting to take shape. It is right to be proud of how we have used our talents. But to crow it over other people is not good. We give thanks for the gifts that we have been given and as some of us had instilled to us it is A.M.D.G. for the greater glory of God that we use these talents and shun pride and greed.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

Heavenly Father, you sent your Only Son into the world to shed light on the darkness that was covering it. Help us to remove the blindfold that prevents us from seeing the light so that we revive and grow in that same life giving light. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever.

Gospel

Matthew chapter 11 verses 16 to 19

You can't have it both ways.

Our Lord is a master observer of people. He sees what they are doing and stores it up in his mind so that he can use it to highlight the message that he is putting across. Today he is using some of things that children do. They want to play together but not everybody will join in. They try different ways. One of the examples is the playing of pipes but nobody would dance. When they go to the other extreme of singing dirges they would not mourn.

We then have a reference to John the Baptist. Our Lord declared that there is no greater profit than the Baptist. People flocked to hear him. He was determined in his message giving. He spoke it as he saw it and didn't mind the consequences which meant prison and death. John lived a frugal life. He didn't eat or drink meaning he didn't sit at banquet tables. But for all this he was deemed to be possessed by a spirit.

On the other hand Jesus did eat and drink. But who did he eat and drink with? Tax-collectors and sinners. Yes tax-collectors and sinners. Not the hypocrites but those who needed his help. He too spoke it as he saw it and didn't mind the consequences which meant arrest and death.

Both John and Jesus spoke the message but neither were accepted because they didn't fit the bill. It was easy to dismiss John. But Jesus, they couldn't fathom him out. Yes they rejected him but he kept coming back.

Your Own Time.

Rosary. Let us ask God to help us proclaim the Word to the people we meet by being ourselves who do their best to live out the Gospel message by what we do and say.

Concluding Prayer

As the days get even shorter, let us strengthen ourselves with a desire to be who we are and follow the Way, the Truth and the Light. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.

Saturday of the Second Week of Advent

Light a candle and make sure it is safe and don't leave unattended.

The Sick

Who are the sick? What is it that makes a person sick? The people in hospital are some of the sick. It doesn't matter why they are in hospital but some part of their body is not right and needs treatment. It is the whole person that needs treatment not just the particular symptom. People may have a mental problem which is not always easy to see or diagnose. Morale and general well-being may not be top notch. Lastly but not leastly is spiritual well-being. There is a vast array of things that can make us sick as well as over indulgence.

When we know that someone is sick we pray for them. We don't always broadcast across the parish because the sick person may want to keep it quiet. What do we pray for? That the person will get better? Yes, that is what we do. How do we define 'better'? Principally that the person will make a full recovery. Then we start to put conditions into it. How old is the person, what is the prognosis, what do they want the outcome to be? There is a whole plethora of considerations isn't there.

Jesus said that it is not the healthy who need the doctor but the sick. He came to cure us and he is with us continually carrying out that mission.

In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen

God our Father, to prepare the way for your Son's coming to us, you sent many prophets. The last one was John the Baptist whose zeal was like a burning fire. Help us to recognise you in other people so that we can live up to the hope that you place in us. Through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God, for ever and ever.

Gospel

Matthew chapter 17 verses 10 to 13

Did you recognise him?

If you have the time have a read of Isaiah chapter 48 verses 1 to 4 and 9 to 11. They fit so well with the gospel. Elijah was a prophet who had the God of Israel at the heart of everything he did and said. We read that he was taken up to heaven in a fiery chariot or a whirlwind of fire. The thought was that he was destined to return at a later date.

In the gospel our Lord agrees that Elijah has to come again. This second coming is to ensure that everything is just so. Our Lord says that Elijah has already come again but he wasn't recognised. Here there is an assumption that Jesus is referring to John the Baptist.

Advent gives us the time to reflect on all aspects of Jesus' coming again. We understand from scripture that he will come with his angels and he will be sitting on his throne of glory. Will there be a big fanfare, will a throng of angels announce his coming like they did at his first coming? Questions that have answers that are hidden from us. If we knew the answers how would we feel? How would we cope? Would we be like children who are impatient for Father Christmas to come? Would we be like a person waiting to undergo an operation, an interview or an examination? God is sparing us that by not letting us know the when, the where and the how. The \$64,000 question is 'Will we recognise him?'

Your Own Time.

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Rosary. Let us ask God to help us recognise him in the people we meet, the Word that we listen to and in our actions and words.

Concluding Prayer

Let our desire to do the right thing in our relationship you Almighty Father and our neighbour burn away the stubble that we allow to get in our way. Through Christ our Lord. Amen

The Lord bless us, and keep us from all evil, and bring us to everlasting life. Amen.