

1st Sunday of Advent



Each year on the first Sunday of Advent, we begin the Church's year.

This is Year 2. It is the year of the Gospel of Mark.

We begin reading Mark's Gospel, semi-continuously on the 10th of January, the First Sunday in Ordinary Time and the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord.

As we begin the season of Advent, we ask God to prepare us for change in our lives so that we may be ready to greet the child Jesus when he comes at Christmas and at the end of time.

Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1. 3-8

Each Advent Sunday begins with a reading from Isaiah. Isaiah is the great prophet of 'the one who is to come'.

Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down !

1 Corinthians 1:3-9

St Paul prays that his community will be open to God's Spirit as they await the coming of Christ.

Mark 13:33-37

Stay awake ! Because you do not know when the master of the house is coming.

ADVENT



The word '**Advent**' means 'Coming'. The first call of Advent is not to prepare for Christmas but to prepare for an even more wondrous coming —the coming of the Lord at the end of time. It is really only from the Fourth Sunday of Advent that the coming of the Christ-child moves on to the centre of the stage.

The word Advent comes from the Latin word 'adventus' which means "coming" and refers to the four-week period before Christmas. 'Adventus' in turn, is a Latin translation of the Greek word 'Parousia' which refers to the future coming or return of Jesus.

Advent is a time of waiting. Waiting in a dentist's waiting room, for example, can be hard; or, even worse, waiting in an airport for a flight that's delayed indefinitely. How do you fill the time? In the first century of the Church's life, people really expected the Second Coming to happen in their lifetime. St Paul tells us, for example, about people who were so convinced the Lord's coming was just around the corner that they gave up work! (2 Th 3:6-13).

There are three Christian prayer-words that are so old that they have survived in the original language of Jesus, Aramaic. This is the language in which they were first prayed.

The two most familiar words are:

"Amen" ("so be it") and
"Abba" ("Father").

The third is

"Maranatha" ("Come, Lord Jesus"). St Paul uses this word at the end of his First Letter to the Corinthians. It also occurs at the end of the last book of the Bible, the Book of Revelation.

Maranatha is the oldest Advent prayer there is. Every time we say it, we pray that Christ will come again.

The liturgical colour for Advent is purple. The only exception is on the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) when Rose-coloured vestments may be used. The Latin word “Gaudete” means “Rejoice!” and the Mass on the 3rd Sunday begins with the words of Saint Paul — “Rejoice (Gaudete) in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice” .

- The **First Sunday of Advent** reminds us that we don’t know the exact time of Jesus’ return and so should always be prepared, always on the watch.
- On the **Second Sunday of Advent** we’re introduced to John the Baptist who prepared people for the coming of Jesus by preaching repentance.
- On **Gaudete Sunday** John clarifies that he is not the Messiah but the one who prepares his way.
- Finally, on the **Fourth Sunday of Advent**, we read Luke’s account of the annunciation to Mary and her obedient response to God’s call.

There are a lot of things in life vying for our attention — the collapse of the economy, the pandemic, the scandals in the Church, our constant efforts to make ends meet, plus all the other day-to-day cares of life and being concerned for other people.

When that huge tsunami devastated north-eastern Japan in 2011, the Japanese national football team came up with a slogan to encourage their suffering people. It read: “**With hope we can cope.**”

The Season of Advent calls for our hope-filled attention. It reminds us that, daunting as our day-to-day worries are, we ultimately place all our hope in the ever-loving and compassionate God. That’s why, with all Christians down through the ages, we can cry out yet again in the Aramaic language of Jesus:

“**Marana’ tha**, Come, O Lord!”



FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT (YEAR B) SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 29

“Watch, therefore; you do not know when the lord of the house is coming”

Mark wrote his gospel to encourage Christians who were suffering persecution for their faith. In today’s Gospel, Mark uses an “apocalyptic” form of writing that was popular during times of crisis. This style borrowed images from the Hebrew Scriptures that depicted a time of turmoil and tribulation before the great “Day of the Lord.” Mark was not trying to frighten them, but to inspire hope in them that God would, ultimately, triumph over evil. No one knows for certain the exact “day or hour” of Christ's return, God's servants must be awake and vigilant for his inevitable coming.

This brief parable of the master returning unexpectedly is typical of Jesus’ vivid way of speaking. The message is typical, too, for Jesus was constantly stressing that there is no time to lose. In the gospel of Mark, especially, there is a feeling of hurry: in chapter one alone there are 14 instances of ‘immediately’! When Jesus came in his earthly ministry, he again and again challenged his hearers to make up their minds **NOW**, to change their ways **NOW**. He challenges us to do the same.

We can hear the rattle of the returning Master’s key in the lock. There is no time to hide the contraband, to pull our uniforms straight before greeting the Master at his entry. Even if we do not think that the world’s end is imminent, even if death is not threatening, every moment counts, every decision is for or against Jesus.

If we need to put things a bit more in order to prepare for the Lord’s coming, is there any valid reason to delay?

As we begin this time of Advent, God invites all of us to reflect on our readiness to bring Christ, Son of God and Son of Mary, to our world today. We

are invited to “wait in joyful hope” for the Lord's coming in the lives of each and every one of us.

The four weeks of Advent are a good time to clean things up for the Lord's coming.

Lord Jesus, help me to use this Advent to prepare my heart for your coming.

APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE

The word apocalyptic means “unveiling” or “revealing.” Apocalyptic literature flourished among persecuted Jews and Christians from the 2nd century before the coming of Christ to the 2nd century AD. Apocalyptic writing is crisis literature. It's the product of oppressed peoples. Basic to its belief is that the evil of a particular historical situation is so overwhelming that only God can rescue the victims and set things right. The apocalyptic author offers hope and encouragement in seemingly hopeless circumstances. The Book of Daniel is the only apocalyptic book in the Old Testament, and the Book of Revelation is the only apocalyptic book in the New Testament, although there are sections with apocalyptic elements in both Testaments.

The People's Rosary Project

We are most grateful to 'The Centre for Theology and Community' who have created this online venture in prayer.

Listen to the testimonies today and watch out here for the next instalment next week.

COPY AND PASTE THIS INTO YOUR BROWSER:

<https://theology-centre.shorthandstories.com/peoples-rosary/index.html>

Anyone who would like to join the Rosary group should email peoplesrosary@theology-centre.org, and they will then send them a link each week.

WORDSEARCH

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