



### **1st Sunday of Advent**

In this Advent season, we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ at Christmas. We can do so by reflecting on the ways in which Christ comes into our lives today.

As we prepare for the coming of the Lord, let us ask his forgiveness for the ways we have failed to follow him in our everyday lives.

#### **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

The prophet looks forward to a time when honesty and integrity will flourish.

#### **I Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2**

Paul urges the Christian community to live the life that God wants.

#### **Luke 21:25-28. 34-36**

Jesus tells his disciples that despite the world's troubles and turmoil, liberation is close at hand.

### **Reflection**

**"When these signs begin to happen, stand erect and raise your heads because your redemption is at hand".**

Jesus often used the phrase "Son of Man" (Aramaic, *bar nasha*) to refer to himself, calling to mind his human nature. He is one of us. Although he came as

a human being, Jesus is also the divine Son of God who will come again in glory. Luke used apocalyptic language from the Hebrew Scriptures to describe the signs that would accompany Christ's return at the end of time. The universe would be shaken in anticipation of God's redemptive power. In the apocalyptic book of Daniel, one "like a Son of Man" ascended to the clouds of heaven to the throne of the "Ancient of Days". This imagery depicted the exaltation of the oppressed Jewish people, and later described the fullness of God's saving power present in the Messiah. Jesus' disciples should not fear these events; they must stand erect, like those preparing for the Exodus, confident that their redemption was near.

Advent is an opportunity to prepare ourselves for Christ's daily arrival in our lives.



#### **NOTE: APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE**

*The word apocalyptic means "unveiling" or "revelation." Apocalyptic literature flourished among persecuted Jews and Christians from the second century before the coming of Christ to the second century of the Christian Era. Apocalyptic writing is crisis literature, 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 in both Testaments with apocalyptic elements.*

#### **Hanukkah Begins at Sunset**

The Jewish feast of Hanukkah begins on the 25th day of the month of Kislev on the Hebrew calendar, and lasts for eight days. A lot of people think of Hanukkah as "the Jewish Christmas," but the two holidays have nothing to do with each other, except that they're celebrated at roughly the same time of year.

The Hanukkah story involves a group of warriors led by Judas Maccabeus. In 164 BC they drove the Syrians out of Israel and reclaimed and purified the Temple, which had been desecrated. According to a story in the Talmud, when the Maccabees retook the Temple, they found only enough oil for one night to light the menorah (the eight-branched candelabrum). Miraculously, the oil lasted for eight nights. The Temple was rededicated, and the Jews celebrated the miracle with an eight-day festival.



## **SWORDS INTO PLOUGHSHARES**

The Coming of Christ

Advent is a season of preparation for **the coming of Christ**. We look back in memory to the **first** coming of Christ at Christmas and we prepare for his **second** coming at the end of time.

As Advent advances towards Christmas the liturgy will lead our thoughts to people like **Isaiah, John the Baptist, Mary and Joseph** who were involved in God's plan of preparation.

The focus of this first week of Advent is not on Christmas but on the final coming of the Lord at the end of time.



It might seem a bit odd to begin the year with thoughts of the end of life. But it 's really like consulting a map to plan our destination before we start the journey.

The gospel of the day is in a style of writing called **apocalyptic**, which means the revelation of divine secrets. We do not know exactly how the physical universe and life on earth came into being, in the first place. But we don't know either if or how life will cease on earth.

Faced with these secrets of God's mind, the biblical writers painted highly imaginative pictures of physical destruction and the accompanying terror. We read of signs in sun and the moon and the stars and about fear paralyzing people.

Perhaps people who have lived through war or pandemic will recognise the feelings. It is quite possible that Luke had in mind the stories then circulating about the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem and about the annihilation of Pompeii after the eruption of Mount Vesuvius.



What is most significant about the Good News of Luke is the **optimism** of his message. Agony and terror are replaced by hope and glory. For the Christian believer the emphasis is not on the **physical life** which is ending but on the **new life** which is about to begin.



