



# *Advent Calendar*

*An journey through Advent inspired by the prayers  
of 'Collect' of Advent Season*

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# The Advent Journey

Advent is the beginning of the liturgical year, a time of joyful anticipation as Catholics prepare for the coming of Christ. The word “Advent” (in Latin *ad+venire*) means “coming” or “arrival,” and during this season, the Church invites us to reflect on three distinct aspects of Christ’s coming: His Incarnation at Christmas, His presence in our daily lives, and His glorious return at the end of time. To guide us in this spiritual journey, the Church uses symbols that are rich in meaning, helping to deepen our understanding and experience of this sacred season.

## 1. Advent Wreath


The Advent wreath, as we know it today, originated in 16th-century Germany, but it became more widely used in Catholic tradition in the 19th century. Its use has since become an integral part of Advent liturgies and family devotions, symbolizing the anticipation of Christ’s coming and the light He brings into the world.

**Circle:** The circular shape of the wreath, with no beginning or end, represents the eternity of God and the everlasting life promised through Christ.

**Evergreens:** The greenery in the wreath symbolizes eternal life, a reminder of God’s unchanging nature and the hope of resurrection.

**Candlelight:** In Scripture, light symbolizes the presence of God and His guidance. Jesus is often referred to as the “Light of the World” (John 8:12).

**Four Candles:** The four candles symbolize the four weeks of Advent, each representing a growing light as Christmas approaches.

A lit purple candle with a plaid ribbon, surrounded by greenery.

First Candle (Hope): Often called the "Prophet's Candle," it reminds us of the hope foretold by the prophets, particularly Isaiah, who spoke of the coming Messiah (Isaiah 9:6-7).

Second Candle (Faith): Known as the "Bethlehem Candle," this candle symbolizes the faith of Mary and Joseph as they journey to Bethlehem, trusting in God's plan.

Third Candle (Joy): This is the "Shepherd's Candle" and is pink (or rose) in colour, symbolizing joy. It is lit on Gaudete Sunday (the third Sunday of Advent), which reflects the joy of the nearing birth of Christ.

Fourth Candle (Peace): Called the "Angel's Candle," this candle represents the peace that Christ brings to the world.

## 2. Advent Calendar

The Advent calendar originated in the 19th century in Germany, where children would mark the days of Advent by chalking lines on a door or lighting a candle daily. It became a tool for teaching the faithful about the journey toward Christmas.

### Meaning and Symbolism:

Each day of Advent is marked with a small window or door on the calendar that can be opened to reveal a Scripture verse, an image, or even a small gift. The calendar emphasizes the passage of time, the anticipation of Christ's coming, and a focus on daily reflection during this holy season.

### Connection to the Church's Teaching:

The Church encourages daily prayer, reflection, and penance during Advent as a way to spiritually prepare for the celebration of Christ's birth. The Advent calendar helps facilitate this daily practice.

### 3. The Jesse Tree

The Jesse Tree is named after Jesse, the father of King David, and it depicts the genealogy of Jesus, tracing His lineage back through the Old Testament. It became popular in medieval times as a way to teach Biblical history leading up to Christ.

Biblical Background:

Isaiah 11:1: "A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots." This prophecy is fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who descends from the line of David.

Each symbol placed on the Jesse Tree represents a key figure or event from the Old Testament that points toward the coming of the Messiah.

Meaning and Symbolism:

Ornaments: The Jesse Tree is often adorned with ornaments representing figures like Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, and others. Each ornament connects the story of salvation from the Old Testament to the fulfillment in Christ.

### 4. Advent Colours: Purple and Rose

The use of purple in the liturgy has ancient roots, symbolizing both penance and royalty. Rose is used specifically on Gaudete / Rejoice Sunday, the third Sunday of Advent.

Purple: (Penance and Preparation) In Scripture, purple was a colour associated with kingship and wealth (Judges 8:26). It also came to represent repentance and the need for spiritual preparation. The Church calls for a time of reflection, fasting, and repentance during Advent, similar to the Lenten season. Purple also reminds us of Christ's kingship, which we prepare to welcome at Christmas.

Rose: (Joy and Hope): This colour signifies joy and is a reminder that, even during a penitential season, the coming of Christ brings joy to the world. On the third Sunday, rose vestments are worn as a sign of joy, signifying that the time of Christ's birth is near. Figuratively speaking, lighting the rose candle during Advent is a bit like mixing chocolate with a pinch of salt—sweet joy with a hint of anticipation.

## 5. The Christ Candle

The Christ Candle is a relatively modern addition to the Advent wreath, added to mark the culmination of Advent on Christmas Eve or Christmas Day. Lighting the white candle is like unwrapping the most beautiful gift—celebrating the Redeemer’s birth in all its splendour.

**Biblical Background:**

John 1:4-5: “In him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.”

The Christ Candle symbolizes the light of Christ entering the world, dispelling the darkness of sin and death.

**Meaning and Symbolism:**

**White Candle:** White represents purity and victory, symbolizing Christ, who is without sin. The lighting of the Christ Candle on Christmas celebrates the incarnation of the Word made flesh.

## 6. The Nativity Scene

The tradition of displaying a nativity scene was popularized by St. Francis of Assisi in 1223. He recreated the scene of Christ’s birth using live animals and actors to help people experience the humility and simplicity of the Incarnation.

**Biblical Background:**

The nativity scene is based on the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, which recount the birth of Jesus in Bethlehem. Luke 2:7: “And she gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn.”

**Meaning and Symbolism:**

**Mary, Joseph, and the Child Jesus:** Central to the nativity scene, these figures represent the Holy Family and remind us of the humility of Jesus’ birth.

**Animals:** The ox and donkey are traditional symbols in the scene, referencing Isaiah 1:3: “The ox knows its owner, and the donkey its master’s crib.”

**Shepherds and Magi:** The shepherds represent the poor and humble, while the Magi symbolize the nations of the world coming to worship the newborn King.



## 7. O Antiphons

The "O Antiphons" are an ancient tradition dating back to the early Church. They are traditionally sung during Evening Prayer (Vespers) in the Liturgy of the Hours, from 17th to 23rd December. They are used as the antiphon for the Magnificat (the Song of Mary) during these days, marking a time of heightened anticipation leading up to Christmas. Each antiphon reflects a title for Christ drawn from Scripture.

### Biblical Background:

The titles are based on the prophecies of Isaiah and include "O Wisdom (=O Sapientia)" "O Lord, (=O Adonai)" "O Root of Jesse, (=O Radix Jesse)" "O Key of David (=O Clavis David)," "O Rising Sun (=O Oriens)," "O King of Nations, (=O Rex Gentium)" and "O God with us, (O Emmanuel)."

### Meaning and Symbolism:

Each antiphon expresses a specific aspect of Christ's mission and the salvation He brings. These prayers encapsulate the longing of Israel for the Messiah and the Church's anticipation of Christ's return in glory.



## Conclusion

The symbols of Advent, from the wreath to the O Antiphons, serve to deepen the Church's reflection on the coming of Christ. They are grounded in Scripture, Church tradition, and centuries of Catholic worship. The purpose of these symbols is not merely decorative but deeply spiritual. They help Catholics focus on the true meaning of Advent—preparing our hearts and lives to welcome Christ. Through prayer, reflection, and acts of love, we are called to make room for Jesus in our lives and to share His light with others. As we light each candle and meditate on these symbols, we are drawn into the mystery of Christ's coming and reminded of the hope, peace, and joy that He brings into the world.



Hope

The Annunciation - Luc Olivier Merson



## FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Readings: Jer. 33:14-16; 1 Thess 3:12- 4:2; Lk 21:25-28,34-36*

Collect:

*“Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,  
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ  
with righteous deeds at his coming,  
so that, gathered at his right hand,  
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly Kingdom.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

It is a privileged time when “the Church makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah” and recalls the long anticipation of Christ’s first coming in history (CCC 522-524). As the Christian faithful, we are encouraged to make the most of this time. Advent is more than a passive waiting; it is an active journey toward Christ, where we strive to become more like Him. How can we do this? By choosing daily to love more deeply, serve more selflessly, and seek justice in all that we do. This prayer urges us to consider how our deeds today reflect the Kingdom we wish to inherit. Are we running to meet Christ, or are we hesitant, holding back from living out our faith fully? The imagery of running to meet Christ emphasizes the urgency and joy we should have in seeking Him, not passively but actively, through deeds of justice, love, and mercy. Our actions now will determine our readiness to enter the eternal Kingdom.

***“Let us run to meet Christ, the King of our hearts,  
and not delay on the way.  
He is already on the road, coming to us,  
and He invites us to meet Him.”***

**St Augustine**



### Activity:

Reach out to a friend you don’t usually call. Check in to see how they’re doing, and offer to help with anything they might need. Follow up later if needed, and consider sending a small Christmas gift as a gesture of care.

## DAY 2 – MONDAY

*Is: 2:1-5; Mt: 8:5-11*

Collect:

*“Keep us alert, we pray, O Lord our God, as we await the advent of Christ your Son, so that, when he comes and knocks, he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise. Through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

This prayer evokes the image of Christ knocking at the door, a reminder of Revelation 3:20, where Jesus says, “I am standing at the door, knocking; if you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in to you and eat with you, and you with me.” This knocking could mean many things: the daily invitations Christ gives us to open our hearts to His love, the call to conversion, or His final coming at the end of time.

It also encourages us to stay awake in faith and be ever mindful of Christ’s presence, both now and in the future. We are called to wait actively, through prayer and praise, ever mindful of Christ’s coming.

Just as we prepare our homes for guests, we must prepare our souls to receive Christ. What areas of our lives need attention? Are we spiritually asleep, or are we alert and ready for His arrival? This prayer invites us to examine our hearts and make sure that we are living in a state of readiness, constantly watching, praying, and praising.

***“The time of Advent is one of vigilance,  
because we do not know when the Lord will come.  
Let us therefore be watchful in all things and pray without ceasing.”***

**St Alphonsus Liguori**



### Activity:

Sometime this week or next, try inviting someone to church who wouldn’t normally attend—maybe someone who has drifted away. Even if they say no, no worries; at least you gave it a shot! Remember, they’re a child of God too, and deserve a chance to be ready when Christ comes knocking!

## DAY 3 – TUESDAY

*Is: 11:1-10; Lk: 10:21-24*

Collect:

*“Look with favour, Lord God, on our petitions,  
and in our trials grant us your compassionate help, that, consoled  
by the presence of your Son,  
whose coming we now await, we may be tainted no longer  
by the corruption of former ways.  
Through Christ our lord...”*

This prayer invites us to move from old, sinful habits and embrace the transformation Christ offers. It calls on God to grant us the strength to endure trials and to welcome Jesus’ compassionate presence. Our journey of faith is about letting go of what holds us back and saying ‘yes’ to the renewal that Christ brings. Advent is a time of preparing to receive the Lord in glory. It is a call to conversion, to be vigilant, and to turn away from sin. The Church teaches that this period should be marked by a heightened effort in prayer, self-examination, and works of charity as well as emphasizes that Christ is always with us, especially in our trials. Through prayer and the sacraments, we encounter Christ and are consoled by His presence, making advent not just a time of waiting, but a period of deep communion with God.

***“To come to be what you are not,  
you must go by a way in which you are not.”***

**St John of the Cross**



### Activity:

Create a symbolic “cleansing” ritual—write down those pecky habits or actions you wish to leave behind, and at the end of Advent, burn or destroy the paper and give them a “fiery farewell” as a sign of embracing new life.

## DAY 4 – WEDNESDAY

*Is: 25:6-10; Mt: 15:29-37*

Collect:

*“Prepare our hearts, we pray, O Lord our God, by your divine power,  
so that at the coming of Christ your Son  
we may be found worthy of the banquet of eternal life  
and merit to receive heavenly nourishment from his hands.  
Through Christ our lord...”*

This prayer expresses our deep longing for Christ's return, when we will be invited to partake in the banquet of eternal life. It reminds us that our lives now are a preparation for this heavenly feast, where Jesus Himself will nourish us. To be “found worthy” means to live in faith, hope, and charity, constantly turning towards Christ and allowing His grace to transform us. The prayer invites us to reflect on how our actions today bring us closer to the eternal life He promises.

The Church teaches that the Eucharist is a foretaste of the heavenly banquet (CCC 1402), where Christ Himself nourishes us with His Body and Blood. As we receive the Eucharist, we are united with Him and with the whole Church, anticipating the fullness of that union in eternal life.

***“You have made us for yourself, O Lord,  
and our hearts are restless  
until they rest in You.”***

***St Augustine***



### **Activity:**

During this advent season, participate in Eucharistic Adoration for at least 30 minutes. Mother Teresa would often remind her sisters, “Time spent before the Blessed Sacrament is the best time you will spend on earth.”



## DAY 5 - THURSDAY

*Is: 26:1-6; Mt. 7:21, 24-27.*

Collect:

*“Stir up your power, O Lord,  
and come to our help with mighty strength, t  
hat what our sins impede  
the grace of your mercy may hasten.  
Through Christ our lord...”*

This prayer is a humble cry for divine intervention. We recognize that our sins are obstacles, impeding the work of God in our lives. However, we call upon the Lord to stir up His power and overcome these barriers through His mercy. It reminds us of our need for God's strength and grace to transform us and to help us live in the freedom of His love. His mercy, when invited into our lives, hastens our conversion and growth in holiness, despite our weaknesses.

The Church teaches that God's grace is necessary for salvation and that human sin creates a separation from God. Yet, through His mercy and grace, made manifest especially through the sacraments, this gap is bridged. CCC 1996, explains that grace is favour, the free and undeserved help that God gives us to respond to his call to become children of God. We rely on God's mighty power to heal what sin has damaged.

***“God is never tired of forgiving us;  
we are the ones who are tired of seeking His mercy.”***

***St John Vianney***



### Activity:

Make a sincere examination of conscience and go to Confession at least once during this season. Remember, the confessional is the only place where the verdict is always mercy.

## DAY 6 – FRIDAY

*Is: 29:17-24; Mt: 9:27-31*

Collect:

*“Stir up your power, we pray, O Lord, and come,  
that with you to protect us,  
we may find rescue from the pressing dangers of our sins,  
and with you to set us free,  
we may be found worthy of salvation.  
Through Christ our lord...”*

This collect prayer invokes God’s mighty power to rescue us from the dangers that our sins present. It acknowledges the reality of sin as a pressing danger, something that not only separates us from God but also threatens our spiritual well-being. The prayer pleads for God’s protection and deliverance, recognizing that only through God’s grace can we be set free and made worthy of salvation. It is a reminder that, despite our weaknesses, God’s power can overcome the grip of sin, and His mercy is ever-ready to bring us back into the fold of His grace.

The Church teaches that salvation is a gift from God, offered through Jesus Christ. However, to receive this gift, we must acknowledge our need for God’s help in overcoming sin. While God offers salvation freely, we must cooperate with His grace through repentance and conversion.

***“The mercies of God are beyond all telling,  
and no matter how many times we fall,  
He is always ready to raise us up again.”***

**St John Chrysostom**



### Activity:

Think of one person you may have wronged, someone with whom things feel unsettled or strained. Take a moment to acknowledge how that relationship weighs on your heart. Now, as a step toward healing, reach out to them, even in a small way—a note, a message, or a gentle conversation?

## DAY 7 – SATURDAY

*Is: 30:19-21; 23-26. Mt: 9:35-10:1,6-8.*

Collect:

*"O God, who sent your Only Begotten Son into this world  
to free the human race from its ancient enslavement,  
bestow on those who devoutly await him  
the grace of your compassion from on high,  
that we may attain the prize of true freedom.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ..."*

This Advent prayer invites us to reflect on the purpose of Christ's coming: to free us from the enslavement of sin and grant us true freedom. The freedom spoken of here is not merely political or societal but the profound liberation from sin and death that Jesus offers through His Incarnation. By awaiting Him devoutly, we open ourselves to God's compassion and grace. This time of waiting in Advent is about preparing our hearts to receive Christ fully, letting go of all that binds us to our old ways of sin.

CCC 457 teaches, "The Word became flesh for us in order to save us by reconciling us with God." Christ came into the world to deliver humanity from sin, an "ancient enslavement" that separated us from God. Advent is a time of hope and expectation, where we renew our hearts and prepare ourselves for the freedom Christ brings. Remember, 'Hope never fails us'. It anchors us, even in life's most challenging storms; it reminds us that better days are always possible. It fuels our resilience, helps us rise again and find light, no matter how dark the path may seem.

***"The deadliest poison of our time is indifference.***

***And this happens, although the praise of God should know no limits.***

***Let us strive, therefore, to praise Him to the greatest extent of our powers."***

***St Maximilian Kolbe.***



### Activity:

Create a Freedom Journal: Start a journal where you reflect on what true freedom in Christ means to you; write down thoughts, prayers, and inspirations you receive during Advent.

Faith





## SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Baruch 5: 1-9; Phil 1:4-6, 8-11; Lk 3:1-6*

Collect:

*“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.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

In Advent, we are on a journey to meet Christ, not only in the celebration of His birth but also in our everyday lives. This prayer helps us understand that earthly pursuits, while necessary, must not overshadow our path toward God. By seeking “heavenly wisdom,” we learn to see life through a divine perspective, making us more attuned to Christ’s presence and teachings. God’s wisdom is a free gift we should ask for earnestly and it can help us to see all things with the eyes of God. It transforms our understanding, directing our actions toward eternal life and union with Christ.

Gaining heavenly wisdom is a journey of continually opening our minds and hearts to God’s truth. Heavenly wisdom differs from worldly knowledge in that it helps us see life from God’s perspective, aligning our thoughts and actions with His will. The Letter of James encourages us to ask God for wisdom directly: “If any of you is lacking in wisdom, ask God, who gives to all generously and ungrudgingly, and it will be given you.” (James 1:5). Our hands must be at work, while our eyes should be towards heaven. Our life should be grounded in purpose, guided by grace.

***“True holiness does not mean a flight from the world;  
rather, it lies in the effort to incarnate the Gospel in everyday life.”  
St John Paul II***



### Activity:

Identify one area where earthly concerns may be taking too much focus (e.g., social media, shopping, over-commitment). Consciously reduce this activity, setting specific limits during Advent.

## DAY 9 – MONDAY

### IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN MARY

*Gen: 3: 9-15, 20, Eph: 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk: 1: 26-38.*

Collect:

*“O God, who by the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin  
Prepared a worthy dwelling for your Son,  
grant, we pray  
that, as you preserved her from every stain  
By virtue of the death of your son, which you foresaw,  
So, through her intercession, we too, may be cleansed and  
admitted to your presence.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

Mary's Immaculate Conception exemplifies God's merciful plan for humanity. Just as He preserved her from sin to prepare her as the mother of Christ, He offers us the grace to turn away from sin and move closer to Him. Through her intercession, we seek purification and ask for a heart that is open and ready to welcome Christ. The Church teaches that Mary, as the Mother of God and the new Eve, has a unique role in salvation history. Her obedience and faith brought Christ into the world, thus enabling our redemption (Lumen Gentium, 56).

***“Never be afraid of loving the Blessed Virgin too much.  
You can never love her more than Jesus did.”***

***St Maximilian Kolbe***



#### **Activity:**

Like Mary who went in haste to serve Elizabeth, seek opportunities to serve others in need, especially during Advent. If you know a neighbour or family member who is struggling, perhaps with childcare, errands, or holiday preparations, reach out to offer help.

## DAY 10 – TUESDAY

*Is: 40: 1-11; Mt. 18:12-14*

Collect:

*“O God, who have shown forth your salvation  
to all the ends of the earth,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may look forward in joy to the glorious Nativity of Christ.  
Through our Lord Jesus Christ...”*

This prayer reminds us that the birth of Christ is God’s ultimate gift of salvation, reaching all nations and peoples. In Advent, we are invited eagerly to anticipate this joy, opening our hearts to receive the promise of new life. By focusing on the Nativity, we look forward with gratitude and renewed faith, joining all creation in welcoming Christ’s light.

Church celebrates Advent as a time of waiting and preparation, not only for Christ’s birth but for His coming into our lives and at the end of time. Christ’s coming is an act of divine love for all humanity, fulfilling God’s promise of salvation. We are called to live in joyful expectation, aware that salvation is meant for everyone.

**““Open wide the doors to Christ.”**

**St John Paul II**



### **Activity:**

Spend some time with someone who may be feeling lonely or doesn’t have many friends—perhaps because they have the charming habit of avoiding social interactions at all costs! Who knows, after this, they may discover they’re better at mingling than they think.

## DAY 11 – WEDNESDAY

*Is: 40: 25–31; Mt: 11:28–30*

Collect:

*“Almighty God, who command us  
to prepare the way for Christ the Lord,  
grant in your kindness, we pray,  
that no infirmity may weary us  
as we long for the comforting presence of our heavenly physician.  
Through Christ Our Lord...”*

This Advent prayer beautifully captures our call to prepare for Christ’s coming, even amid life’s challenges. It reminds us that, though we face weaknesses or difficulties, we are to persist with hopeful hearts, awaiting the healing and peace that Christ, our “heavenly physician,” brings. Just as Jesus healed people physically and spiritually during His earthly ministry, He continues to offer comfort and renewal to all who seek Him.

The Church teaches that Jesus has come to heal the whole man, soul and body; he is the physician the sick have need of (CCC 1503). Advent is a time to strengthen our relationship with Christ, to seek healing for our souls, and to remove obstacles that might prevent us from fully welcoming Him. Just as we prepare our homes for guests, we are called to prepare our hearts for Christ’s comforting presence.

***“Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless.  
God is merciful and will hear your prayer.”***

***St Padre Pio***



### **Activity:**

Create a “Healing Prayer” list. Write down specific personal or spiritual struggles you’d like Jesus to heal—be as honest and specific as you can. Each day, bring these to God in prayer, asking for His grace and strength to work through them, one step at a time.



## DAY 12 – THURSDAY

*Is: 41:13–20; Mt 11:11–15*

Collect:

*“Stir up our hearts, O Lord,  
to make ready the paths of your Only Begotten Son,  
that through his coming,  
we may be found worthy to serve you with minds made pure  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

As we journey through Advent, this prayer invites us to a time of preparation and purification, not only in external actions but deep within our hearts and minds. “Stir up our hearts” is a call to awaken our spirits, shedding anything that hinders our relationship with God. Advent is a season of making a way for the Lord, a time to purify ourselves from sin, distractions, and attachments that pull us away from His presence. By preparing the paths of our hearts, we create a dwelling place for Christ, allowing His peace and love to shape our lives so we may serve God more worthily and purely.

The coming of God’s Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. Thus, the Church invites the faithful to enter a season of penance, prayer, and purification to be ready for this sacred encounter with Christ at Christmas.

***“We prepare for the coming of Christ by straightening our paths,  
by clearing out from our hearts of everything that could prevent  
His peaceful entrance.”***

***St Bernard of Clairvaux***



### Activity:

Set aside some quiet time today for prayer, asking God for the strength to let go of those obstacles.

## DAY 13 – FRIDAY

*Is: 48: 17-19; Mt 11:16-19*

Collect:

*“Grant that your people, we pray, almighty God,  
may be ever watchful  
for the coming of your Only Begotten Son,  
that, as the author of our salvation himself has taught us,  
we may hasten, alert and with lighted lamps,  
to meet him when he comes  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

In Matthew 25:1-13, in the parable of the ten virgins, we have five virgins who keep their lamps filled with oil, ready to greet the bridegroom, while the other five are unprepared and left behind. We should maintain a spirit of readiness and nurture our faith consistently, so we are prepared to meet the Lord at any time. The “light” represents both the faith we keep alive in our hearts and the good works we do in response to God’s love.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church emphasizes the virtue of vigilance, especially in the liturgical season of Advent: “When the Church celebrates the liturgy of Advent each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior’s first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming” (CCC 524). We are encouraged to remain spiritually awake and watchful, attentive to both the joys and challenges that lead us to deeper holiness.

***“Let us not sleep as others do, but keep ourselves awake,  
aware that the day of the Lord is near.”***

***St John Chrysostom***



### **Activity:**

Set an “Advent Watch” by choosing specific times throughout the day to pause, pray, and reflect, even if only for a few minutes. Perhaps, set an alarm for midday and surprise yourself with the beautiful prayer of ‘Angelus’, a prayer so classic, an apt one to pray during this season!

## DAY 14 – SATURDAY

*Sirach 48: 1-4, 9-11; Mt. 17: 10-13*

Collect:

*“May the splendour of your glory dawn in our hearts,  
we pray, almighty God,  
that all shadows of the night may be scattered and  
we may be shown to be children of light by the advent of your  
Only Begotten Son.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This Advent prayer, asking that “all shadows of the night may be scattered,” reminds us of our deep need for God’s light in our lives. We pray to be transformed into “children of light,” allowing God’s love and truth to shine through us. Just as dawn scatters the darkness of night, so too does Christ’s presence dispel the shadows in our hearts, making us radiant with His grace. By living as children of light, we become bearers of hope and peace for others.

The Church teaches that Christians are called to be “children of light” through Christ, who leads us out of darkness. The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “having received in baptism the word, the true light that enlightens every man, the person baptized has been enlightened, he becomes a son of light, indeed he becomes the light himself (CCC 1216). Baptism immerses us into this light, beginning a journey of conversion, so that light might shine out of darkness. The season of Advent encourages us to renew our commitment to Christ and to reject the shadows of sin, embracing His light more fully.

***“Christ is the light that cannot be quenched;  
let us reflect this light so as to shine upon others.”***

***St Gregory of Nazianzus***



### Activity:

Light a candle in a quiet, reflective space as a symbol of your desire for Christ’s light in your life. You might even do this while praying the Angelus, if you’ve decided to bring that beautiful tradition into your day.

A photograph of a woman wearing a red headscarf, looking down at a baby lying in a manger. The scene is lit with a warm, reddish glow. The word "Joy" is written in a white, cursive font across the center of the image.

Joy

John B. Clark  
10/2005

## THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Zeph 3:14-18; Phil 4:4-7; Lk 3:10-18*

Collect:

*“O God, who see how your people faithfully await the  
feast of the Lord’s Nativity,  
enable us, we pray,  
to attain the joys of so great a salvation and to celebrate them  
always with solemn worship and glad rejoicing.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

Gaudete Sunday marked by the lighting of the pink candle is a moment to pause amidst Advent’s waiting and feel the warmth of hope and joy. This day reminds us that even in times of preparation, we’re invited to rejoice in the nearness of our Saviour. We are reminded that God became one of us, meeting us in the simplicity of a manger, a scene that encourages humility, charity, and attentiveness to those in need.

Advent urges us to an “active vigilance,” to be prepared, watching and praying, that we may recognize Christ in the people and moments around us. Pope Francis reminds us that in Advent, we are called to “cultivate an interior life of silence and attentiveness, awaiting the Lord’s coming, not only at Christmas but each day

***“We know that the coming of the Lord is threefold:  
in the flesh, in our hearts, and in glory at the end of time.”***

***St Bernard of Clairvaux***



### Activity:

Create a “Bethlehem Corner,” dedicate a small space in your home to a Nativity scene.

## DAY 16 – MONDAY

*Num 24: 2-7, 15-17. Mt. 21: 23-27*

Collect:

*“Incline a merciful ear to our cry, we pray, O Lord, and, casting light on the darkness of our hearts, visit us with the grace of your Son. Through Christ our Lord...”*

This prayer reflects Advent’s spirit, inviting God to shine His light on the darkness within us. We acknowledge our need for His mercy and anticipate the grace of Christ’s coming to dispel our fears and struggles. Advent is a time for honest reflection on our hearts, bringing our burdens to the Lord and trusting in His compassion. Christ’s Nativity is more than a historical event; it’s a reminder that God continually desires to enter our hearts with His transformative love. Advent prepares us for the “coming of the Lord” in three ways: by remembering Christ’s historical birth, welcoming His presence daily in our lives, and looking forward to His final coming. The Church urges us to seek healing and grace, letting Christ’s light dispel any spiritual darkness as we prepare for His coming.

***“To live is to change, and to be perfect is to have changed often.”***

***St John Henry Newman***



### **Activity:**

Make today a day of visiting and listening. Give others space to speak.

## DAY 17 – TUESDAY

*Gen 49:2,8-10; Mt 1:1-17*

Collect:

*“O God, Creator and Redeemer of human nature,  
who willed that your Word should take flesh  
in an ever-virgin womb,  
look with favour on our prayers, that your Only Begotten Son,  
having taken to himself our humanity,  
may be pleased to grant us a share in his divinity.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This passage captures the profound mystery and humility of the Incarnation the Word of God entering the world through Mary, an ever-virgin, to redeem humanity and share with us the divine life. Advent calls us to prepare for Christ’s coming, not just recalling his birth but inviting him to enter our lives in a deeper way. As we ponder this prayer, we recognize that, through Jesus, we are invited to participate in God’s own life. This preparation is about creating space in our hearts for his presence. The humility of the Incarnation reminds us to embrace simplicity, allowing God’s grace to transform us from within.

Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that “the Word became flesh to make us ‘partakers of the divine nature’” (CCC 460). Through the Incarnation, Christ shared in our humanity so that we might share in his divinity, a gift that we are called to accept in faith and joy. This process of divinization is a lifelong journey, as we continually grow closer to God.

***“To always be close to Jesus, that’s my life plan.”***

***Blessed Carlo Acutis***



### Activity:

“Jesus in Every Encounter” Throughout the day, remind yourself to see Jesus in each person you meet, especially those with whom you may have difficulty.



## DAY 18 – WEDNESDAY

*Jer 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-24*

Collect:

*“Grant, we pray, almighty God,  
that we, who are weighed down from of old  
by slavery beneath the yoke of sin,  
may be set free by the newness of the long-awaited Nativity  
of your Only Begotten Son.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This prayer expresses our longing for freedom from sin. Advent is a time to acknowledge the “yoke” of sin that weighs us down and to look forward to the joy of release and redemption through Christ’s birth. Just as Israel awaited its Messiah, we too wait, with open hearts, for the One who can set us free from everything that holds us back. Jesus’ coming invites us to surrender our burdens and enter into the peace and newness he offers.

Church teaches that Jesus came to save sinners and take us back to the Father, emphasising that His mission on earth is one of redemption and liberation from sin. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is one of the beautiful ways the Church offers us to encounter this liberation. Through confession, we experience Christ’s mercy, a foretaste of the ultimate freedom he brings.

***“God has promised forgiveness to your repentance,  
but He has not promised tomorrow to your procrastination.”***

***St Augustine***



### Activity:

Make today a day to receive the Sacrament of Reconciliation.

## DAY 19 – THURSDAY

*Judges 13: 2-7, 24-25; Lk 1:5-25*

Collect:

*“O God, who through the child-bearing of the holy Virgin  
graciously revealed the radiance of your glory to the world,  
grant, we pray,  
that we may venerate with integrity of faith  
the mystery of so wondrous an Incarnation  
and always celebrate it with due reverence  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This passage reminds us that through Mary’s role in the Incarnation, God’s glory entered the world in a profound and visible way. Mary’s faith and humility brought the Savior into the world, and we, too, are called to bear God’s light through our lives.

Venerating the birth of Jesus with integrity of faith and celebrating it with due reverence involves both an inner disposition and external actions. It requires us to recognise the significance of the Incarnation and respond with our hearts, minds, and lives in ways that reflect our commitment to Christ. The birth of Jesus is the ultimate gift of love and humility. It signifies God’s willingness to enter into our human experience, bringing hope and salvation. To venerate this event with integrity means acknowledging its profound meaning that God becoming man and allowing this truth to transform our lives. Celebrating with reverence calls us to approach Christmas not just as a festive occasion, but as a sacred time of reflection, gratitude, and renewal of our faith.

***“We are called to live as followers of Jesus Christ,  
who loved us and gave himself for us.”***

***St John Paul II***



### Activity:

Please listen attentively to the first reading today and write a reflection on it.

## DAY 20 – FRIDAY

*Is 7:10-14; Lk 1:26-38*

Collect:

*“O God, eternal majesty,  
whose ineffable Word the immaculate Virgin received  
through the message of an Angel  
and so became the dwelling-place of divinity,  
filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, grant, we pray,  
that by her example  
we may in humility hold fast to your will.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

Mary's response to the angel Gabriel reveals her deep humility and willingness to accept God's will. Filled with the light of the Holy Spirit, she became the dwelling place of divinity an extraordinary privilege that was met with an equally extraordinary submission to God's plan. Her example calls us to reflect on our own lives and our openness to God's word. In a world often driven by self-interest, Mary models the beauty of humility and trust, reminding us that true greatness comes from our willingness to serve God and others. Mary is the model of perfect discipleship. Her acceptance of God's will illustrates the ideal response to divine grace, encouraging us to trust in God's plan for our lives.

***“The greatest honour we can give to the Virgin Mother  
is to be filled with the Spirit of her Son.”***

***St Bernard of Clairvaux***



### Activity:

Take some time to open the Bible and read Philippians 2:3-4 five times throughout the day.

## DAY 21 – SATURDAY

*Song 2:8-14 or Zeph 3:14-18; Lk: 1:39-45*

Collect:

*“Hear in kindness, O Lord, the prayers of your people,  
that those who rejoice at the coming of your Only Begotten Son  
in our flesh may, when at last he comes in glory,  
gain the reward of eternal life.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This collect prayer invites us to contemplate the mystery of Christ's incarnation and to prepare ourselves for his return in glory. By asking the Lord to “hear in kindness” our prayers, it acknowledges our dependence on God's mercy and recognises that the joy we feel in celebrating Christ's birth is deeply connected to our hope for eternal life. Jesus teaches that belief in Him is foundational to gain eternal life. He says in the Gospel of John, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (Jn 14:6). Faith is not simply intellectual assent but a living trust in God, shaping our thoughts, actions, and choices.

This prayer links Christ's first coming as well as his promised return, which is a central theme in Christian teaching. As St Augustine reminds us, “God became man so that man might become God,” reflecting the profound purpose of the Incarnation to restore humanity's relationship with God and to elevate us to divine life. Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC 460) echoes this, saying, “The Word became flesh to make us partakers of the divine nature.”

***“God created us without us but he did not will to save us without us.”***

***St Augustine***



### Activity:

Dedicate part of your day to actively listening to someone maybe your friend, coworker, or family member. Be fully present, resist the urge to interrupt, and respond with empathy.

An artistic illustration of the Nativity scene. In the foreground, the Virgin Mary is kneeling, holding the infant Jesus wrapped in swaddling clothes. Behind her, Joseph is visible, also kneeling. The background is filled with a multitude of angels, each depicted with a halo and hands clasped in prayer. The overall color palette is soft and muted, with a warm, golden glow. The word "Peace" is written across the center in a glowing, white, cursive script.

*Peace*

## FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

*Micah 5: 1-4; Heb 10: 5-10; Lk 1:39-44.*

Collect:

*“Pour forth, we beseech you, O Lord, your grace into our hearts,  
that we, to whom the Incarnation of Christ your Son  
was made known by the message of an Angel,  
may by his Passion and Cross  
be brought to the glory of his Resurrection.  
Through Christ our Lord...”*

This prayer, often known as the concluding prayer of the Angelus, is a beautiful invocation asking God to fill our hearts with grace, focusing on the mystery of the Incarnation—Christ becoming human through the message delivered by the Angel Gabriel. It is traditionally prayed three times a day—morning, noon, and evening—as a way to sanctify the day and recall the central mystery of our faith. The practice of praying the Angelus dates back to the Middle Ages and was meant to bring people’s minds and hearts back to God throughout the day. The ringing of church bells often marks the time for the Angelus, serving as a reminder to pause and pray, whether alone or in community.

Church teaches that grace is a free and undeserved gift from God, helping us to respond to His call and become His children (CCC, 1996). Sanctifying grace, in particular, is infused into our souls at baptism, making us part of God’s family and helping us grow in holiness. Actual grace, which helps us in particular situations to do good and avoid evil, is also freely given by God. St. Thomas Aquinas said, “Grace is nothing else but a certain beginning of glory in us,” underscoring that grace is a foretaste of the eternal life God desires for us.

***“God gives where He finds empty hands.”***

***St Augustine***



### Activity:

Make a thank-you card for your parents to show appreciation for the many blessings and graces you’ve received through their love and care.

## DAY 23 – MONDAY

*Mal 3: 1-4, 23-24; Lk 1: 57-66*

Collect:

*Almighty ever-living God, as we see how the Nativity of your Son  
according to the flesh draws near,  
we pray that to us, your unworthy servants,  
mercy may flow from your Word,  
who chose to become flesh of the Virgin Mary  
and establish among us his dwelling,  
Jesus Christ our Lord..."*

This prayer is a plea for God's mercy, a gift we can never earn but which He freely offers. God's mercy flows through His Word, which is both the Scriptures and Christ Himself, the Word made flesh. We come as "unworthy servants," acknowledging our need for God's grace, and trusting that His mercy will meet us there, transforming our lives.

Church teaches that God's mercy is boundless, available to all who sincerely seek it. In *Misericordiae Vultus*, Pope Francis describes God's mercy as "the bridge that connects God and man, opening our hearts to the hope of being loved forever despite our sinfulness." This mercy is available especially in the sacraments, particularly Reconciliation, where we directly experience God's forgiveness and love. Through confession and repentance, we open our hearts to be renewed and strengthened by His grace.

***"He has forgotten your sins; never recall them again."***

***St Thérèse of Lisieux***



### Activity:

Take time to read Matthew 5:7, and try to forgive at least one person who has wronged you before Christmas.



## DAY 24 – TUESDAY

*2 Sam 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14,16; Lk 1: 67-69*

Collect:

*Come quickly, we pray, Lord Jesus, and do not delay,  
that those who trust in your compassion may find solace and relief  
in your coming.*

*Through Christ our Lord..."*

The joy and thrill of December 24th bring a unique excitement, as the long-anticipated celebration of Christmas is just hours away. Make sure to enjoy the happiness and hope that this day and night brings. It's a day that is paralleled to none, where God makes everything new and fresh. Enjoy the liturgy, and the sacred night of Bethlehem celebrated in every church, enjoy the humble beauty of God's love made flesh.

Reflecting on the nativity, Pope Francis once said, "On this night, love has conquered. A new light has dawned on humanity, a light that transforms life, renews history, and begins again." He invites us to contemplate the humility of Christ, born in a stable, to see that God's power lies in love and mercy, and to remember that Christmas calls us to welcome this love into our hearts and lives, especially by reaching out to those in need.

***"Trust the past to the mercy of God,  
the present to His love,  
and the future to His providence."***

***St Augustine***



### Activity:

Take a stroll over to the church (yes, leave the car keys at home—no need to wait for Mass to start!). Most churches are open on the morning of the 24th, and you can soak in the calm, the decorations, and the beautiful lights filling the space. And on your way back, treat yourself to a good cup of coffee—you've earned it!

# Peace on Earth



## **Acknowledgments**

These reflections incorporate material from the following sources:

- The New Revised Standard Version Catholic Edition (NRSVCE) Bible, for scriptural references.
- The Roman Missal, specifically the Collect Prayers of the Advent season.
- The Catechism of the Catholic Church.