

RESOURCES FOR WEEKDAY PRAYER

DAY BY DAY

THROUGH ADVENT



ST MARYS CF10

DAY BY DAY

**A RESOURCE FOR WEEKDAY CELEBRATIONS
OF THE HOLY EUCHARIST DURING ADVENT**

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AN INTRODUCTION

At St Mary's Church, we offer Mass each day. Many other churches do the same or will at least celebrate the Eucharist at some point throughout the week. The material found here aims to enrich our celebration of the Holy Eucharist on weekdays during Advent, and because we love to share what we have and do with others, we freely share this and other resources which we have created.

Here, for each day during Advent you'll find:

- An Introduction to the Eucharist
- A homily or reflection for use after the readings
- Prayer of the Faithful (Intercessions)

The material, however, is also suitable for use at home or in private, particularly perhaps where people are unable to attend the Eucharist during the week.

Other material for Advent for use in public worship and private prayer is also being prepared by STMARYSCF10. More details and lots of other resources can be found on our website at www.stmaryscf10.com.

You are, of course, free to share and reproduce any of this material, although we'd really appreciate an acknowledgement!

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

MONDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 2:1-5; Matthew 8:5-11

INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel reading today, the Centurion approaches Jesus, asking him to heal his servant but declares that he is not worthy to have Jesus under his roof. We pray that, through the healing presence of Jesus, we may be worthy of his coming.

REFLECTION

A survey of homeowners across the country, which asked how much money they spent each year on redecorating, revealed that Londoners on average spent the most with £5,781, closely followed by the West Midlands and those living in Wales. At the bottom of the chart, Scots claimed to spend £566 on decorating their homes annually, with the North-East following on their tail at £758.

We may imagine that, as a man of some wealth and stature, the home of the centurion in today's gospel was a place of much coming and going, much activity, and welcome. After all, he had position and power, employed his own servants and was used to entertaining at home and being entertained in the homes of others. However, he stops Jesus from inviting himself to his home. This is nothing to do with the state of his home, assuming it would have been of a significantly higher standard than the average person's at the time. Rather, his rejection recognises something far more profoundly personal, and indicates for us what or who he recognises Jesus to be.

The centurion knows that a word from Jesus is enough to heal his servant, and Jesus is astonished by the faith he sees before him. The words of the centurion are used and adapted by us each time we are invited to receive Jesus in the Sacrament of the Eucharist. The Eucharist is such a precious gift, given to us directly by Jesus. It is a gift through which we receive all the benefits of his saving death and resurrection. It is a gift which heals us. Perhaps, sometimes, we can take this gift for granted, and overlook the treasure that is being given to us. As unworthy as we may be or feel, Jesus continues to come to us, making his home with us, feeding us with his presence, healing us with his love.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to Prayer

We are not worthy to receive the Lord, but he comes with forgiveness and healing.
In faith, we seek the peace which he alone can give.

Intentions

For the Church, the household of faith,
that all Christians may listen for the voice of the Lord,
and welcome all who come in search of Jesus.

For those who have no home to call their own
and all who struggle to pay bills or maintain their household
that they may receive the support they need.

For peace throughout the world
that the Lord, who bring the peace of his Kingdom, may reign in the hearts of all people.

For the nations of the world
that all people may be gathered in, to feast in the kingdom of the Lord.

For those who are concerned about a loved one
and for all those who are paralysed with pain or illness
that their faith in the Lord may be strengthened to bring them peace and healing.

For our departed brothers and sisters
that they may feast in the heavenly banquet.

Concluding Prayer

Loving Father,
our faith is often weak,
our lives unworthy to receive Jesus.
When he comes,
may he find us waiting eagerly in prayer.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

TUESDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 11:1-10; Luke 10:21-24

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel Reading Jesus is filled with joy by the Holy Spirit. Let us celebrate with deep joy that we may be ready to greet Jesus at his coming when justice will flourish and peace till the moon fails.

REFLECTION

"If you can't explain it simply, you don't understand it well enough." This is one of the many quotes attributed to Albert Einstein, acclaimed to be one of the greatest physicists of all time, and who also said of himself, "It's not that I'm so smart, it's just that I stay with problems longer." The world is filled with extremely clever people, gifted with an astute mind that seems to function at a higher level than many of us, and able to process things in a way that most of us can only imagine, and achieving great things. And yet something different is going on in today's gospel.

The Mysteries of God are not confined to those who are clever or clued up, the academic and the studious, although, of course, the existence of such people in the Church is so very important to our understanding of God as they dedicate themselves to a prayerful study of our faith. Yes, the Church needs such theologians but Jesus exclaims that something of the Mystery of God is hidden, and revealed to "mere children."

The Christian Faith is a faith of revelation. We cannot know everything there is to know about God, and all we know about him is because he has chosen to reveal it to us. It's not so much about grasping the Mystery but being drawn into it, an experience borne from a pure heart and an open mind, a trusting spirit and eagerness to be close to God, as we discover all that is being revealed to us - which is what prayer is about, and perhaps what being a child is about. It's what all of us are called to have, no matter how our intelligence is measured.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, let us pray that the love of Jesus may be revealed to all people as we bring to God the needs of the church and the world.

Intentions

For the Church
that our living and preaching of the Gospel may be filled with the joy that comes from God.

For all who exercise authority in the world
that, with a spirit of wisdom and insight,
they will use it to protect the poor, the weak and those at risk.

For the children of the church
that their presence will bring us closer to the Kingdom of the Lord.

For theologians, preachers and teachers of the Christian Faith
that, through a life of prayer, they may be drawn deeper into the Mystery of God.

For the sick
that all who are humbled with illness may sense the joy of Christ's presence.

For our departed brothers and sisters
that they may see, face to face, the Lord of heaven and earth.

For ourselves
that we may have a childlike spirit to accept the will of God,
and share his goodness with our family and friends.

Concluding prayer

Father, as we prepare for the birthday of Jesus,
fill us with a childlike faith
to anticipate with excitement his coming into the world.

FRIST WEEK OF ADVENT

WEDNESDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 25:6-10; Matthew 15:29-37

INTRODUCTION

The readings today show a new way of life when the blind will see and the hungry are fed. We pray that we may glimpse in our Eucharistic feast the banquet of God's kingdom.

REFLECTION

Henri Nouwen, a Dutch Catholic priest and spiritual writer, wrote much about grief. "What to do with our losses?" he asks. "We must mourn our losses. We cannot talk or act them away, but we can shed tears over them and allow ourselves to grieve deeply. To grieve is to allow our losses to tear apart feelings of security and safety and lead us to the painful truth of our brokenness."

In the gospel reading, as Jesus sits on the shore of Galilee, crowds bring to him people who lame and crippled, blind and dumb and so many others to his feet. They are people whose lives have been broken and who perhaps are mourning their losses, shedding tears over them. We can only imagine what had happened to these people. Perhaps some were born with a particular disability, or maybe others had experienced a life-changing accident which devastated their lives, or maybe disease had touched their lives. The crowds are soon astonished to see them healed: the dumb speak, the lame walk, the blind can see.

"Somehow, in the midst of our tears, a gift is hidden," continued Henri Nouwen. "Somehow, in the midst of our mourning, the first steps of the dance take place. Somehow, the cries that well up from our losses belong to our songs of gratitude." Jesus continues in his sorrow for all the people who have been with them. He knows that by now they must be hungry. He has removed the mourning veil covering the people, and now provides a rich banquet for the people. The prophecy of Isaiah is coming true. Perhaps, these people, would recall such words as they experienced all this, "We exult and rejoice that he has saved us, for the hand of the Lord rests on this mountain." Perhaps, on that Galilee shoreline that day, there was much dancing and singing that day.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us place our trust in the Lord who saves us and pray for the Church and all people.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may grow in responsibility towards the sick and the suffering.

For all ministers of Word and Sacrament
that they may be filled with a vision of God's glory.

For all who suffer and face disappointment
that they may be given a healing of heart and spirit.

For all who mourn the death of a loved one
that the Lord God will wipe away every tear.

For the departed
that they may be seated at the table of the saints and feast in the banquet of heaven.

For ourselves
that we may grow in compassion and sorrow for the hungry and all who are in need.

Concluding prayer

Father, in the Eucharist you give us a vision of your heavenly banquet.
As we pray for the coming of your kingdom, feed us with your grace,
so that we may receive Christ when he comes in glory.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

THURSDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 26: 1-6; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

INTRODUCTION

It is so often difficult to discern and obey the will of God, and so we pray for the grace of discernment, and for a true openness to God's will.

REFLECTION

Are you the kind of person who, when buying a new piece of technology or a flat pack item of furniture, puts the instruction manual aside to intuitively find your own way around, or do you meticulously read the manual first before attempting any challenge?

Perhaps, at times, we take similar approaches to the teaching of Jesus. It's quite possible for someone to be a Christian and seldom pick up the Bible. We prefer to find our own way around our faith. Or perhaps we can sit in church services and allow the words of Holy Scripture to go over our heads, so easily distracted are we at times! But Jesus' words are not empty, and they are not designed or shared simply to fill an awkward silence. They are words which we are called to take to heart.

The Holy Scriptures are for us not so much an Instruction Manual which we pick up and discard at a whim but they should become the solid foundation of our lives. "Trust in the Lord for ever," says the prophet Isaiah "for the Lord is the everlasting rock." Perhaps, from time to time, we can reassess what part the Bible has in our daily life and ensure that it is at the heart of our prayer life, at the heart of each day, as we attend to the words of Jesus, allowing them to take deep root in our hearts, and helping us to discern the will of God who is our everlasting rock.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us pray to the Lord who is the strength of his people,
and who challenges us to build our lives on him.

Intentions

For the whole people of God
that we may be more faithful in hearing his word and putting it into practice

For all who preach the word of God
that they may be filled with his Holy Spirit.

For the unity of Christians
that by building our lives more firmly on Christ we may come to find one another.

For those who are over-burdened with problems and difficulties
that trusting in the Lord they may grow in his strength.

For the nations
that all leaders and governments will hear the voice of God
and learn to seek his will to create a world of justice, love and peace.

For the departed
that all who have served God faithfully in this life may
enter the joy of the heavenly kingdom.

Concluding Prayer

Help us, Father, to build our lives on Jesus,
that with the saints we may learn to do your will,
and come to enjoy the glory of your heavenly kingdom.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

FRIDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 29:17-24; Matthew 9:27-31

INTRODUCTION

We pray for the faith to meet and recognise Jesus in Word and Sacrament, so that when he comes in glory we may be ready to receive him.

REFLECTION

Pope Francis, in his book entitled 'The Church of Mercy,' writes "Rampant capitalism has taught the logic of profit at all costs, of giving to get, of exploitation without looking at the person... and we see the results in the crisis we are experiencing! [The Church] is a place that teaches charity: it is a 'school' of charity, which instructs me to go and encounter every person, not for profit, but for love."

Today, in the gospel reading, there is encounter between two blind men and Jesus. They have found their way to him, and they explain that if he wants to, Jesus can heal them. "Do you really believe I can do this?" he asks. They do, and so Jesus heals them because, he says, their faith deserves it." He then tells them not to tell anyone about it. He does not want to gain cheap publicity; he does not wish to profit from their plight and their necessary faith. His encounter with them was not for any profit on his but borne from compassion and pity and love

Jesus did not give in order to get for, here he is, creating a community with love at its heart. Every encounter with Jesus is life-giving, and the Church is called to be a people and provide a place in which we are schooled in charity, helping to change those we encounter, as we ourselves are changed, so that all will have their hearts opened to the love of God, and to know their true worth.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us pray to the Lord who is our light and our help and who takes pity on all his children.

Intentions

For the Church
that God may open the eyes and ears of all Christians to
hear his call and see the path that leads to him.

For Church leaders
that they may see clearly and be given an insight to the will of God for his Church.

For our local schools
that, as they prepare for their own Christmas celebrations,
both children and teachers may glimpse the light of Jesus and the true wonder of Christmas.

For employers,
that they may recognise the dignity of their workforce
and treat with fairness.

For all who are in need of healing
that they may be given the faith that comes from God.

For our community
that all in society may take care of those with particular needs.

For the departed
that they may see Christ in the glory of the Father.

Concluding Prayer

Give us, Lord, the faith to long for your kingdom,
that when Christ comes in glory he may find us watching and waiting
and ready to be led to the glory of his kingdom.

FIRST WEEK OF ADVENT

SATURDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 30:19-21,23-26; Matthew 9:35-10:1,6-8

INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel reading today, as Jesus makes his way through all the towns and villages, he is moved by compassion for the people. We pray for the strength to be ministers of his compassion in the world.

Homily

In the midst of all the fun, laughter and entertainment of TV programmes such as Comic Relief, Sports Relief or Children in Need, the laughter stops from time to time as the presenter cuts to a short clip reminding viewers what the programme is really all about and encouraging us to donate to their charity. They use all the tools available to them with clever editing, emotional messages and moving music to highlight a particular need. Yes, sometimes, our sense of compassion needs tweaking. We can so easily overlook the needs of so many people with whom we share our world.

Today, in the Gospel reading, as Jesus makes his way through all the towns and villages, he feels sorry for the people because they are like sheep without a shepherd, harassed and dejected. He looked upon them with so much compassion but doesn't simply walk by or do nothing. He responds in practical ways, as he share his mission with those who follow him.

He takes his twelve apostles aside and shares his authority with them, sending them out to those who are lost, to proclaim the Kingdom of Heaven, and cure the sick. "You received without charge, give without charge," he says. Today, there are so many problems presented to us, and so many people in need, and so much that does or should fill us with compassion. We know that each of us can't solve every problem or need we encounter but we can count our blessings and take the words of Jesus to heart. "You received without charge, give without charge."

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us pray to the Lord, our loving shepherd, for the Church and all his people.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may be reminded of our mission to the lost, the
poor, the forgotten and the weak.

For those who have lost their way in life,
for the addicted, the hopeless and the unloved
that the Lord will lead us all to the new life of his kingdom.

For those who have been separated from the life of the Church
that the good news of the Kingdom may rouse them to faith.

For those who give of themselves freely in the service of others
that their work may bear lasting fruit until the Lord comes again.

For the sick * - that in the love of Christ they will find comfort and healing.
For the departed * - that they may reap the rewards of eternal life.

For those who care for the sick, the poor and those in need,
that they may moved by a compassionate heart and a strong sense of purpose

Concluding Prayer

Father, your Son gathers us into the fold of his Church.
Strengthened by his presence,
send us out to proclaim his glory,
and to share with others the life of your kingdom.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT MONDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 35:1-10; Luke 5:17-26

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel reading, the crowds are filled with awe, and praise God as they witness Jesus' healing power. We pray for the grace to worship God, that when Christ comes in glory he may find us praising him.

REFLECTION

As a child, Betty Campbell, born in Cardiff to a Welsh Barbadian mother and Jamaican father dreamed of being a headteacher. When she shared her dream with her own headteacher, she was told in no uncertain terms to get the idea out of her head because 'the obstacles were insurmountable.' Betty was moved to tears and knew that she received this response simply because she was black. Years later, she would become the first black headteacher in Wales. A few years after her death in 2017, her image became the first statue of a named woman in a public place in Wales. It stands in Central Square near the main Railway Station. She had navigated her way through and around and over all the so called "insurmountable obstacles."

Likewise, too, the man in the gospel reading seems to have insurmountable obstacles ahead of him. He or his friends want to get to see Jesus but the house where he is to be found is so full that there is simply no way through the crowds. And so, with a touch of ingenuity, stubbornness and resolve they make their way up to the flat roof, burrow through and lower him down. They are driven, above all, by faith, a faith which Jesus says heals the man, liberates him, gives him what he and his friends had dreamed of.

All of us will experience times when we meet with obstacles. Sometimes, getting around such obstacles may send us in a completely different direction from which we had planned. The church too, as a community of faith, meets many obstacles in proclaiming the Kingdom of God. Sometimes these obstacles come from outside, but others too sadly come from within the church. During Advent, we hear the voice of John the Baptist who, echoing the prophecy of Isaiah, prepared a straight way for the Lord. If we have as much faith as those four friends then we too can journey through the seeming "insurmountable obstacles" and bring others to Jesus, so that all of us may experience the liberating power of his love.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

The Lord brings forgiveness and healing. As we keep this Advent season, let us pray with faith, knowing that he comes to save all people.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may work together,
encouraging the faith of others and bringing people to the knowledge of God.

For liturgists and all those responsible for the worship of the church
that they may help us to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.

For those whose hearts are paralysed by sin and selfishness
that, through the grace of conversion, the Spirit of the Lord will free and inspire us all.

For our friends and all who care for us
that, together, we may help create a community of love
where all are befriended and know companionship and support

For the physically disabled, the sick and the dying
that in the mystery of their suffering they may sense the closeness of Christ.

For those who are treated unjustly, for victims of abuse, crime and hate
that they may know their true worth and be liberated to do all that God is calling them to do

For the departed
that they may praise God in the glory of heaven.

For ourselves
that we may live without sin, and in readiness for the coming of the Kingdom.

Concluding Prayer

Lord, free us from all that separates us from you,
that when Christ comes in glory
he may find us ready to receive him.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT TUESDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 40:1-11; Matthew 18:12-14

INTRODUCTION

When Jesus comes in glory he will seek out all who are lost or gone astray. Gathered into his Church we pray that the lost will be found so that on the last day, we may be numbered together with the saints.

REFLECTION

"We learned about love by receiving love from everyone," said Adul Samon, aged 14 years old. He had been one member of a junior football team rescued from the Tham luon Bang Non Cave in Thailand along with 11 other boys aged 11 to 16 and their 25 year old coach. Heavy rainfall had trapped them in the cave before an amazing rescue mission, watched by the world, brought to safety. During the time in the cave, the boys had no contact with the outside world until the first rescuer arrived, and they had no idea that anyone was looking for them. We can only imagine what they were feeling, and the joy they felt on being rescued.

In the gospel reading, Jesus, in talking about a lost sheep, is using not only an image that would be familiar to shepherds but one that all can relate too. We will all know the experience of loss in many way. In his parable, the Shepherd leaves the 99 sheep, who are safe in their togetherness, to seek out the one who has wandered away. When he finds the sheep, he is filled with joy – and we can imagine the sheep too must have experienced some contentment at returning to the flock!

Yes, Jesus is filled with joy when he finds and brings back those who are lost. This is why he has come into the world. This is what his mission is all about, to lay down his life for us, and to bring us home rejoicing to the Father's house. As we gather at the Lord's table, may we experience the saving love of Christ. No matter how lost or not we are, may we trust in him, and stay with him, and be numbered among the saints. As we heard in the prophecy of Isaiah, "He is like a shepherd feeding his flock, gathering lambs in his arms, holding them against his breast and leading to their rest the mother ewes"

THE PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us pray to the Lord, who cares for his people as a shepherd for his flock.

Intentions

For the Church
that all God's people may welcome the stranger and seek out the lost.

For our bishop and all the pastors of the Church
that they may shepherd the People of God in the way of Christ.

For all who have lost their way in life or strayed away from responsibilities
that the Lord will be their guide and shepherd.

For those with no place to call home, or people to call family
that we may learn to share the love of the Lord, who comes to dwell with his people.

For our families and friends
that our homes may be places where Christ's love and Compassion is found.

For those who place themselves in danger to serve others
that they may grow in the regard we have for them,
and be strengthened in their resolve.

For all those who suffer
that they may receive the consolation of the Lord.

For all who have died
that the Lord may lead them to their rest.

Concluding Prayer

We thank you, Lord, that you shepherd your people
into the life of your kingdom.
As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ
help us to look forward with joy to his coming.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT WEDNESDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 40:25-31; Matthew 11:28-30

INTRODUCTION

In the Eucharist we are reminded of the care and concern of Jesus for his people as he comes to us in Word and Sacrament. We cast our cares on him, and pray in his name, for he is gentle and humble of heart.

REFLECTION

In a recent report in a British tabloid newspaper, a lorry driver who wished to remain nameless said he wasn't surprised the UK was experiencing driver shortages. He claimed that his working conditions in the UK were worse than what he experienced during his time on five tours to a Bosnian war zone. There are, of course, many jobs that are dangerous, and there are lots of jobs where people experience difficult and demanding conditions for relatively low pay or are burdened by almost unattainable and unrealistic targets and outcomes set upon them by their employer.

In the gospel reading today Jesus is addressing not simply those who are wearied by life and difficult circumstances but by the burdens placed on them by religious figures who remain somewhat distant from them. They have made following God to be a difficult, almost impossible task. On many occasions he attacks such hypocrisy and here, now, he invites people to come to him, to take rest, to have peace.

Yes, the way with Jesus will sometimes be difficult – and, for some, there may be danger. After all, he demands that we take up our cross to follow him. However, Jesus doesn't burden us with unachievable demands. As the prophet Isaiah says, "He gives strength to the wearied, he strengthens the powerless. Young men may grow tired and weary, youths may stumble, but those who hope in the Lord renew their strength, they put out wings like eagles." Whatever difficulties or demands we experience, we know that we can approach the Lord, who is "gentle and humble of heart."

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us cast our cares on Christ, praying in his name, for the Church, the world and all people.

Intentions

For the Church
that, like Jesus, we may be gentle and humble of heart

For the Jewish people
as they (prepare to) celebrate their festival of Hanukkah, the feast of lights.

For all who are exploited by unjust regimes, or who work in dangerous situations.

For all whose lives are burdened with particular difficulty, hardship or poverty
and those who care for them.

For all who are weighed down with illness or sickness,
and await the healing power of Christ.

For our departed brothers and sisters
that they may find rest for their souls.

Concluding Prayer

Father, we commit the needs of the world into your loving care.
May all who turn to you, long for your kingdom,
and be filled with the promise of your peace.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT THURSDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 41:13-20; Matthew 11:11-15

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel reading, we are drawn to the witness of the prophets and to John the Baptist. Let us listen to their message and prepare the way for the Lord in our lives.

REFLECTION

On January 6, 2021, the United States Capitol in Washington, D.C. was attacked by a mob of supporters of President Donald Trump. Their aim was to overturn his defeat in the 2020 presidential election. The Capitol was locked down and the building evacuated. Law enforcement officers were assaulted and the building vandalized. Five people died as a result of the riot, and many more were injured, including 138 police officers. This is just one example of a violent response as crowds attempt to change something they are unhappy about. How easily people's sense of anger or even their own sense of injustice and what is right and wrong can be channelled into violence rather than peaceful protest. Yes, on this, like many other occasions, "The violent are taking it by storm."

This very human experience and reaction was not uncommon either in the Ancient World and so when Jesus proclaims that, up to now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been subjected to violence and the violence are taking it by storm his listeners may have thought of similar insurrections and violent uprisings. But now something else is happening. The least in the Kingdom is greater even than John the Baptist. Jesus has begun to reveal a new world order.

Today, there is still much unrest and dissatisfaction, and there are so many places where violence either brims beneath the surface or explodes with terrible consequences. The Kingdom which Jesus proclaims is a kingdom of love and peace. As Christians, we have a duty to work for justice everywhere, to build friendships, strengthen relationships, nurture understanding and love, and to do all this through peaceful means.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Faced with the violence and confusion of the world, we are told not to be afraid. Let us pray for the Lord's help in all that we do or say.

Intentions

For the Church throughout the world
that we may remain firm in proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

For all nations and countries
that the Lord will transform the desert of our world today
into a place of peace and plenty.

For theologians, preachers and scholars
that they may help us to understand the message of the prophets
and the truth of the Scriptures.

For those with financial difficulty and hardship
and for all whose lives are chaotic or in crisis.

For ourselves
that we may have the faith and courage of John the Baptist
and, like him, reveal the life of the kingdom.

For all who are ill
that they may hear the words, "Do not be afraid, I will help you"

For the dead
that they will come to rejoice in the Lord and share in his glory.

Concluding Prayer

Lord, help us to listen to the voice of your prophets
so that we may be ready to celebrate the birth of Christ
and ready to receive him when he comes in glory.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT FRIDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 48:17-19; Matthew 11:16-19

INTRODUCTION

We ask the Lord to help us know and recognise Jesus so that when he comes to us we may receive him with love and faith.

REFLECTION

We can be easily swayed. The world today is full of false narratives and fake news, created to unsettle society, and manipulate people to fight for a cause which may have little or no foundation. Jesus understands how fickle and easily swayed we are, and he recognises this regarding the different ways in which both he and John the Baptist are viewed by some.

They weren't happy with John because he fasted. They weren't happy with Jesus because he ate and drank with sinners. It seems that such people want to have their cake and eat it. Jesus stands resolute in the midst of such dissatisfaction. He is never swayed from his mission by popular opinion or social expectations.

It can be difficult to swim against the current or live in a way that is counter cultural, to speak up and stand out for the vulnerable in the face of power, or to speak when we are silenced. It may be that we are somehow misjudged by others or perhaps our achievements and worth are overlooked and disregarded. In these circumstances, all we can do is to remain true to ourselves and, above all, to remain true to God who, says the prophet Isaiah, "teaches what is good for us and leads us in the way that we must go."

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Jesus is a friend to all those in need of his forgiveness. Let us pray that all people may look forward to his coming with faith.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may help the world to see Jesus in the lives of all believers.

For spiritual directors and confessors
that they may be filled with discernment and wisdom.

For those who are unpopular for standing up for what is right
that their voice may be strengthened, and their hearts filled with love.

For those who make and enforce the law
that they may do so with integrity and wisdom.

For those who are new to the Christian faith
that they may continue to follow Jesus and experience the joy of his Salvation.

For the sick
that they may know the presence of the Lord in their lives.

For the departed
that the Lord will welcome all who have died to the glory of his kingdom.

For ourselves
that we may be alert to the commandments of the Lord.

Concluding Prayer

Loving Father, help us to listen to the voice of the prophets
And to obey your commandments
Inspire us with your Spirit to recognise the love of Jesus alive in the world.

SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT SATURDAY

LECTIONARY: Ecclesiasticus 48:1-4, 9-11; Matthew 17:10-13

INTRODUCTION

There are many times when we fail to see things for what they are. We ask God for a greater understanding of the mystery of Christ's coming.

REFLECTION

There are certain people who are so famous that it's difficult for them to be out and about without being recognised and receiving all kinds of attention from the public or the paparazzi. Some may resort to concealing themselves with some kind of physical disguise whilst others may be surrounded by security guards and others to protect them from the crowds or even from danger. There are many privileges that come with fame and fortune – and many difficulties too.

John the Baptist's arrival on the scene was dramatic to say the least. He is one of the few people in the gospels of whom we receive a physical description of what he wears and how he looked. There would be no mistaking his fiery preaching and his call to repentance, emerging as he did from the desert, surviving on a simple diet of locusts and wild honey. His death, too, was publicly known and caused shivers amongst his followers. Yet there were some who did not recognise him as the prophesied precursor to Jesus. He was the one who had been sent in the fashion of Elijah, whose own torch-like words and fiery ascent to heaven were imprinted upon the people of Israel as they longed for the coming of their Messiah.

"I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him," said Jesus. Perhaps all of us, at times, can be guilty of overlooking or disregarding the signs of God in the world. Maybe we are just too busy or distracted - and we know that the world certainly throws so many distractions in our way. Christmas preparations brings with it much anxiety within the midst of excitement. So many concerns and worries are wrapped up within the joy and anticipation, the hopes and dreams. We can discover Christ within all of this but sometimes we may need to slow down, to look and listen and be attentive to the One who has come and will come again. The One of whom John the Baptist spoke. "I must decrease so that he will increase," said John the Baptist as he blends into the background and points to Jesus.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to Prayer

Let us pray for the needs of the Church and the world, and for a greater understanding of the coming of the Lord in our lives.

Intentions

For the Church
that the truth of the gospel may be revealed to all who call themselves Christian.

For all bishops, priests and deacons
that they may help us to understand the mystery of Christ's coming.

For a strengthening of community life and a true concern for all people
that the hearts of all may be turned to the needs of others.

For families and friends who are separated by anger or hatred
that bitterness and hurt may be dissolved by God's love.

For those who live in the darkness of pain, confusion and upset
that the light of the Lord will shine in their lives.

For the departed
that, on the last day, all who have died may be revealed as children of light.

Concluding Prayer

Father, take away the darkness which hides the truth of your gospel.
As we prepare for the coming of our Saviour,
help us to share the light of your truth with all people.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT MONDAY

LECTIONARY: Numbers 24:2-7,15-17; Matthew 21:23-27

INTRODUCTION

We pray that we may receive Christ with unquestioning acceptance and learn to know and love his ways.

REFLECTION

The Irish playwright and raconteur Oscar Wilde, famous for so many quotes and sayings, once wrote, “Wherever there is a man who exercises authority, there is a man who resists authority.” In the gospel reading today, as Jesus teaches in the Temple, the chief priests and elders ask him a simple question, “Whose authority have you for acting like this?” It’s an understandable question for them to ask him. After all, they are the religious leaders of the day, responsible for the Temple worship and they need to challenge this roving Rabbi. They also have an ulterior motive, however, for they are trying to glide their way through popular opinion, not wanting to upset the people who believed that John was a prophet, and so they try to choose their words carefully.

Their mini debate, however, ends with silence. Jesus refuses to engage with them no longer. If they cannot give an answer to his question, neither will he answer their question, and he leaves them to draw their own conclusions from his own teaching. Sometimes, we may find aspects of the Christian tradition difficult to believe or understand or follow, and we often encounter different interpretations of Holy Scripture and conflicting opinions on Christian ethics. In every quandary of our faith, it’s quite appropriate to ask does it come from heaven or from humans

So that we may “grow in the knowledge of the Most high,” to see what the Lord would make us see. “I see him – but not in the present,” reads the book of Numbers, “I behold him – but not close at hand...”

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us raise our voices in prayer
that the darkness of this world will shine with the light of Christ.

Intentions

For all Christian people
that we may have the wisdom and insight to recognise the things of God.

For all bishops
that they may exercise their authority with care and compassion.

For all those who question and cry out to God
that they may approach him with opened eyes and a loving heart.

For the world
that the Lord will bring peace to the nations, and justice to the oppressed.

For our civic leaders
that they may act wisely and honestly for the good of the community.

For the sick
that they may receive the peace of Christ through the compassion of others.

For the dead
that they may be raised to the glory of heaven and inherit the life we hope to share.

Concluding Prayer

Father, you so loved us that you sent Jesus to be our Saviour
Prepare our hearts to receive him as the Lord of our lives
and help us to recognise him when he comes to us in glory.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT TUESDAY

LECTIONARY: Zephaniah 3:1-2,9-13; Matthew 21:28-32

INTRODUCTION

We believe in Christ who was sent to reconcile us to God. We pray for grace to follow in his way and enter the glory of his kingdom with joy and humility.

REFLECTION

In 2002, James Timpson, the CEO of the UK shoe repair and key cutting company, Timpsons, visited a local prison where he met a young man called Matt. He immediately liked Matt and believed he would make an excellent addition to the business. When he was released from prison, he was offered a job at the company, and he went on to become one of their most successful branch managers. Realising that there would be many more people like Matt, James Timpson set upon a programme of employing more ex-offenders, and now they are one of the largest employers of ex-offenders in the UK, with 10% of their workforce made up of people with criminal convictions. “We don’t judge people on what they’ve done in the past, preferring instead to focus on what they can do in the future,” says the company.

It can be difficult for people to turn their lives around, especially when society can be so unforgiving, or when people find it almost impossible to gain employment in order to live independently and contribute towards society. In the gospel reading today, Jesus declares that those who have done misdeeds are entering the kingdom of God before the holy and religious people. It is a staggering statement for them to hear.

“You need feel no shame for all the misdeeds you have committed against me.... In your midst I will leave a humble and lowly people,” we hear from the prophet Zephaniah. The example of a life turned around can be inspiring, and yet the church, called to be holy, declared to be holy, is also a collection of sinners, people like you and me, who need the reconciling love of God, as we “seek refuge in the name of the Lord.”

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Believing in Christ and looking for his coming in glory, let us pray in his name that all people may rejoice in the good news of salvation.

Intentions

For the Church throughout the world
that we may be a humble and lowly
people, always ready to turn away from our sins.

For our parish
that, through our Advent and Christmas celebrations, others
may believe in the gospel of salvation.

For theological colleges and courses,
and all who are involved in the selection and training of clergy
that the Church may be served by people of obedience and holiness.

For our community
that, by working together, we may become a people of trust and welcome.

For the sick
that they may know the presence of the Lord in their midst.

For the departed
that, through the forgiveness of their sins,
the Lord will welcome them into the glory of his kingdom.

Concluding Prayer

Father of love,
may we respond to your gospel
by turning away from our sins
and embracing the life of your kingdom
that when Christ comes he may find us worthy to receive him.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT WEDNESDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 45:6-8,18,21-25; Luke 7:19-23

INTRODUCTION

In the Gospel Reading today, John the Baptist sends his disciples to ask Jesus if he is the one who is to come. As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth, let us pray that we may be confident of his coming and share with others our experience of his kingdom.

REFLECTION

The impacts of climate change are devastating. Around the world storms, floods and wildfires are intensifying. Air pollution affects the health of tens of millions of people and unpredictable weather causes terrible damage to homes and livelihoods. While there are advances in tackling it, the nations are not acting fast enough. Most often, it is those who live in poverty who suffer first, as rising temperatures cause floods and famine bringing devastating effects and humanitarian crises. "I am God, unrivalled" continues the prophecy of Isaiah, and yet humanity has so often acted so arrogantly and selfishly with our eyes on profit and financial gain, and little thought of the effects of our actions.

The Hope of Advent is not just for us as individuals. It is a hope that extends to the whole world that God has created. "Thus says the Lord, creator of the heavens, who is God, who formed the earth and made it, who set it firm, created it no chaos but a place to be lived in." So goes the prophecy of Isaiah. Each of us has a responsibility to care for God's Creation, to value the gifts he has given us, and to do all we can to alleviate the terrible consequences of climate change and environmental damage.

Amongst the miracles performed by Jesus which transformed the lives of those who are deaf, dumb or diseased, blind or lame was the "Good News proclaimed to the poor." These are signs given to John the Baptist disciples that Jesus was indeed "the one who is to come." There is no one else to wait for. So, during Advent, as we seek light during the darkness, and warmth from the cold, we can commit ourselves more fervently to praying and working for those who are poor, to bring them good news not simply in words but in our actions as we seek to live more sustainable and selfless lives.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

As we prepare for the coming celebration of the birth of Jesus, let us pray in his name that all people may know the glory of his coming.

Intentions

For the Church
that all Christians may have confidence in the coming of Christ
who heals the sick and gives sight to the blind.

For those who search for the truth but have not discovered Christ
that their journey may bring them to the Creator of heaven and earth.

For a true valuing of God's Creation
that we and all people will live with integrity
and true concern for the world, especially the poor.

For those who live in the darkness of confusion, doubt, disbelief or depression
that the light of Christ may come to enlighten their hearts and minds.

For those who live and work in this community
that, in the midst of their busyness and Christmas celebrations
they may discover Jesus as 'the one who is to come.'

For the sick
that God, from whom comes victory and strength,
may bring healing and strength to all who suffer.

For the departed
that all who have died may be raised to life in the glory of heaven.

Concluding Prayer

Father, you are the Lord, unrivalled.
May we who gather in your Son's name
celebrate his coming with joy
and share the life of his kingdom with all people.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT THURSDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 54:1-10; Luke 7:24-30

INTRODUCTION

John the Baptist is the messenger who prepares the way of the Lord. Like him, let us prepare a way for the Lord in our own lives and share the joy of his coming with others.

REFLECTION

At the beginning of the novel by Lionel Shriver called, ‘We need to talk about Kevin,’ a story about a mother who tries to come to terms with the murder by her psychopathic son of two of his fellow students, is a quote by Cathy Rinder Templesman, “The child who is most unlovable is the child who may most need to be loved.”

In the powerful prophecy of Isaiah which accompanies us through Advent, we are given the constant story of God calling his people back, and the story of his constant love. “The mountains may depart, the hills be shaken, but my love for you will never leave you and my covenant of peace with you will never be shaken, says the Lord who takes pity on you.” Yes, there are moments when God is angered, beautifully expressed in the prophet’s writing, but the assurance come, again and again, that the Lord has come and will come to our rescue.

We know that Human history is full of terrible atrocities, and human beings have the potential to do both the most awful things and the most amazing. God’s plan though, announced by John and his Baptism of Repentance, was that we may be gladdened by the saving advent of Christ who laid down his life for us. God loved the world so much that he sent his only Son. Despite, at times, being most unlovable, God continues to love and still.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Jesus comes to us with salvation and peace. Let us now make our prayers in his name for the sake of his Church and the whole world.

Intentions

For the Church
that all Christians may live together in the love of God,
who never forsakes us and who always takes pity on his people.

For all bishops, priests and deacons
that they may speak with a prophetic voice which proclaims Jesus as Lord.

For the sick
that the Lord may come to the help of all who live with sickness or suffering.

For the leaders of the nations - that they may always be aware of the needs of everyone and work with justice and concern for all.

For places of fear and violence
that the peace of Jesus, who comes to dwell in our midst,
may overcome darkness and fear.

For those who feel lost or unloved,
That our hearts may be deepened to share God's love
especially with those we find most difficult to love.

For the departed
that all who have died may be raised to the glory of the kingdom.

For ourselves - that we may always accept what God has in mind for us.

Concluding Prayer

Father, as we have listened to your Word,
may we always have the courage to respond to in faith.
Listen to the prayers we have made in Jesus' name
and help us to prepare eagerly for his coming.

THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT FRIDAY

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 56:1-3,6-8; John 5:33-36

INTRODUCTION

We ask God to help us to be lights shining in the darkness of the world so that, like John the Baptist, we may bear witness to Christ's coming.

REFLECTION

The Cardiff community of Butetown, or Tiger Bay as it was most familiarly known worldwide in the last century, is home to one of the oldest multicultural communities in the country, and the oldest established Somali community outside Somalia. Drawing sailors from around the world, many people settled there and made it their home, helping to make Cardiff what it is today: the fastest growing city in Europe and the capital of Wales. The community provides an example of how people can live tother with difference and diversity, a place where those who were once foreigners found a new place to call home and take their place in the building of a nation.

Today, quite apart from economic migrants, the plight of refugees is never far from our mind and sadly, from time to time, there emerges a new global crisis where thousands of people are displaced from their homes as they seek to find a place of sanctuary.

Isaiah's prophecy is one that embraces all people, and for those who were drawn to the People of Israel, the words are strong and welcoming: "Let no foreigner who has attached himself to the Lord say, 'The Lord will surely exclude me from his people'...these I will bring to my holy mountain." They, like the those born into the Jewish community, will also have a place on the mountain of God. "I will make them joyful in my house of prayer," we hear. "My house will be called a house of prayer for all people." As we approach the season associated with giving and receiving, and of enjoying family, friends and brightening our home, may we welcome those in need, and create an hospitable and welcoming church and community for all people.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to Prayer

My friends, let us pray to the Father who, through Christ, gathers all people into his kingdom.

Intentions

For the Church
that all Christians may be lights to the world,
giving witness to Christ and his love for all peoples.

For this parish
that we may always be ready to welcome others and never
exclude anyone from the love of the Lord.

For leaders and politicians
that they may have a care for justice and act with integrity.

For migrants and refugees
and all who cannot live in peace in their homeland
that the Lord, who welcomes all people, will give them cause for joy.

For the sick
that the Lord will dwell in the hearts of all who suffer,
bringing his peace and the light of his coming.

For outcasts and all who live on the edge
that our society may grow in compassion and concern for all people,
regardless of their background.

For the departed
that the Lord, who gathers all people, may bring the dead to the joy of his kingdom.

Concluding Prayer

Father, you sent Jesus who has carried out the work of salvation among us. As we prepare to celebrate his coming at Christmas, bring us to the fulfilment of our salvation in the glory of your kingdom.

17 – 24th DECEMBER

From the 17th December until the morning of the 24th December, Advent takes a turn as we focus more on preparing for the celebration of Christ's birth in Bethlehem.

Whilst the world grows more excited - and perhaps more anxious - and busyness becomes the nature of each day, we enter the momentum of God's hand in the lives of those most closely caught up in the birth of Christ.

LECTIONARY

The momentum of the Gospel readings at Mass each day throughout this part of Advent take an almost chronological order as we are drawn into the drama of the Incarnation, the lives of Mary and Elizabeth intertwined, as we move closer to the celebration of Christ's birth.

The silent presence belongs to Christ. We hear no words, see no movement, unlike John who even in his mother's womb is given a stage direction to kick and leap in his mother's womb at the presence of Jesus who as yet unborn has already stirred the lives of all these players.

The Genealogy of Matthew sets the historical context. Time is important, as is the hand of God in every generation of the People of God, as Abraham's promise of descendants like the stars and sand is seen in its entire perspective, a retrospective glance across the ages.

We move each day from Nazareth to the Hill Country of Judah, meandering between the lives of Joseph and Zechariah, Mary and Elizabeth, and little John the Baptist who takes his first breath. The songs of Mary and Zechariah, so strong in sentiment that they have slipped into the heart of the church's prayer, as morning and evening each day the faithful sing out their words.

Yes, these time from the 17th December is a perfect prelude to the celebration of Christ's birth which is drawing nearer now.

The reflections offered here for this period of Advent are perhaps less homiletic and more reflective and meditative which may or may not be useful to you! You may also find one of our other Resources useful. Called '*Ancient Words*' it offers a reflection for each of the Advent 'O' Antiphons used as the Gospel Acclamation each day.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

17TH DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Genesis 49:2,8-10; Matthew 1:1-17

INTRODUCTION

As we draw near to Bethlehem, let us pray that Christ may be born in our hearts, and the Wisdom of God lead us into all truth.

REFLECTION

The long list of generations in today's gospel may be monotonous for us to hear but perhaps this family tree may serve for us a Litany of Love, the verses filled with momentum, as we move through the ages from Abraham to Jesus, recalling the hand of God in each generation.

Familiar and less familiar figures fill each verse
with the heroes of our divine history.
Their experiences are complete in themselves
and yet each makes it possible
for God's People to grow,
learning lessons, moving on.

The Litany of this family tree
is filled with people given a second chance.
Here are the weak and the strong,
the helpless and hapless,
the great and the good,
with a few undesirables thrown in for good measure.
Now and then an historical event
is added to the plot to provide perspective,
Babylon makes it mark.
Time is important.

The birth of Christ
has been a long time coming,
although the promises to Abraham
are still as fresh as the morning.

Time is important,
and now the time has come
as the prelude to the opening scene
of Christ's coming is prepared.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

The Lord, our God, is coming: let us put aside fear and look forward to the future with courage, as we pray for the Church and all people.

Intentions

For the Church * - that the Lord will bring to the Church wisdom, fresh understanding and new vision.

For all who are preparing for Christmas - that they may reflect on the true meaning of the coming of Christ.

For the leaders of our country -that they may be blessed with wisdom and integrity to work for a just and peaceful society.

For our families and friends – that, as we near the Christmas celebrations, we may be generous with our time for one another, and discover afresh the reality of ‘God-with-us’.

For the sick* - that Christ, who came to share our human nature, may bring his strength and gentleness to all who suffer.

For the departed* - that, born of a woman, Jesus may open in our flesh the way to eternal life and joy.

Concluding Prayer

Father, your Word took flesh in the womb of Mary, and became human like us. Listen to our prayers which we make in his name. Grant us a share in his divinity and a vision of your glory.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

18TH DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Jeremiah 23:5-8; Matthew 1:18-24

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel reading, we hear again of Joseph's obedience, and the part he plays in our Saviour's birth. May we, like him, be open to God's design and make him known in the flesh of our lives. Rejoicing in Emmanuel, God with us, let us turn to him in penitence and faith, for he comes to save us with outstretched arm.

REFLECTION

His sleep is disturbed.
The dangers and doubts
slip into his unconscious mind
as his waking moments and sleeping times collide.
His anxiety takes shape in an angel,
and he wakes assured of his call,
clear of the path ahead.

They set up home together,
His life has shifted now.
The growing presence of God
fills their life.

Their predicament peels back the hiddenness between them,
their lives laid bare by the baby on the way.
Within their domestic bliss
each day they discover
the disruptive art of doing God's will.

"Do not be afraid."
The angel's words echo in his life,
a litany of love

One day,
the angel will disturb his dreams again
as Herod breathes his threats,
bringing bloodshed,
a prelude to asylum in another land,
and the dangers of loving.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us not be afraid to present our prayers to the Father
for he desires that all people are saved by his Son.

Intentions

For the Church throughout the world
that, by accepting the law of Christ, we may be set free from all sin.

For the bishops of the Church
that they may be guided by the Spirit of God.

For all who are setting up home together
that they may find room for Christ and make a holy dwelling place.

For all people throughout the world
that they may turn away from the darkness of their sin.

For all who suffer
that they may know that God is with them.

For the poor and oppressed
that they may take courage in the God who comes to live with his people.

For the departed
that they may be freed from their sin and enjoy the freedom of heaven.

Concluding Prayer

We thank you, Lord, for the example of Mary and Joseph.
As they opened the way for the coming of Christ,
may we too open our lives to accept his will.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

19TH DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Judges 13:2-7,24-5; Luke 1:5-25

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel the birth of John the Baptist is announced. We all have a part to play in the story of Salvation. In this Mass, as we experience the salvation of Christ, let us pray for a clearer understanding of our life and calling.

REFLECTION

Zechariah and Elizabeth emerge from the wings as we perceive the preparations in place for the birth of the one sent to prepare the way.

God works against the odds,
upends our expectations,
redirects us in his way.

The message emerges once again,
"Do not be afraid."

We fear what remains unknown
and this has not happened before.

He had looked forward to a quieter life
as older age set in,
his dreams of being a father far behind him,
resolved to the situation that they shared,
and brings them closer together.

But there is a twist in the tale.
Zechariah is silenced,
the vision he receives is beyond words,
and he is left to sign a new language
that goes unspoken.

He sees out his Temple duties,
as difficult as this may be,
as tongue tied as he is,
and returns home.
There are happy times ahead.

Elizabeth conceives,
and for nine unfathomable months
she keeps herself hidden.

In their household of faith,
there is silence and stillness and seclusion,
as they experience the hand of God
sweeping gently through their lives,
as they play their own part
in the coming of Christ into the world.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to Prayer

In the confidence of Christ who comes to save his people, let us offer our prayers to the Father.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may fulfil the calling of Christ and proclaim his wonders to the world.

For all who are baptized
and all preparing for the sacraments of Christian Initiation
that they may realise their calling to a new way of life.

For all who have received distressing news
that they may discover in Christ a sign of hope and peace.

For all who find faith difficult
that they may be given true faith and love to celebrate the mystery of God in the flesh.

For the sick
that they may be filled with the Spirit of God and be aided by the grace of Christ.

For the departed
that they may stand in God's presence and serve him in the freedom of heaven.

Concluding Prayer

God our Father, Christ comes as a sign:
a sign of salvation and peace.
Help us to celebrate his coming with joy,
that when he comes in splendour our lips may sing his praise.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

20TH DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Isaiah 7:10-14; Luke 1:26-38

INTRODUCTION

At the message of an angel, Mary welcomed Jesus. Let us pray that we may welcome Christ in the sacrament of his body and blood, and become a temple of God's Word (as we seek purity of heart by turning away from sin).

REFLECTION

Today, it's Mary's turn in the pattern of readings which leads us closer to Christmas. It's the first time in the gospel according to St Luke that we meet her. It won't be the last. Her presence will be felt throughout. Her motherhood a ministry which lasts a whole lifetime well beyond her son's childhood years.

Again, an angel.
A message, "Do not be afraid."
There is nothing to fear.

There is talk of kings and thrones,
and ancestors pulled from the deep past
as God's plan fits into history,
unravels through the human story,
There is shadow and shade,
the Shekinah light of divinity covers her.

There are questions, too,
as she wonders how this can ever be.
They are questions wrapped up in submission,
she takes with faith the gift
that transcends human understanding.

She does not walk away
or ask for more time.
There is no delay.
She welcomes him into her heart
even before she feels him growing in her womb.

Her story is wrapped up
with that of her cousin

for she is pregnant too.
This is a family affair, so it seems,
and she knows Elizabeth needs her.

There is joy to come,
but now, for a moment, there is stillness.
The angel's exit lets her alone
to feel the presence of another who,
at this moment,
at this time,
has leaped into the darkness
and stirs her on in haste
upwards to the hills
where another moment waits.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us present our prayers of concern to the Father, and pray that his kingdom will come.

Intentions

For the Church
that nourished by his Word and Sacraments
we may receive blessings from the Lord and reward from the God who saves us.

For our community
that we may have the faith to perceive the work of the Lord
and the courage to respond to his love.

For those who live in the darkness of depression, loneliness or illness
that they may know "God-is-with-us."

For those who work for democracy in their own land
that people may live in a just and fair society.

For a deeper sense of prayer in the life of our parish
that we may earnestly seek the will of God who comes to liberate us from darkness.

For the departed
that Jesus, the Key of David, will open the gates of his eternal kingdom.

Concluding Prayer

We thank you, Father, for the Blessed Virgin Mary.
At the message of an angel, she welcomed your Son.
Hear our prayers
and help us to follow Mary's example of doing your will.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

21ST DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Song of Songs 2:8-14; Luke 1:39-45

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel, Elizabeth welcomes Mary as the mother of her Lord. Trusting in God's promises, may we welcome all who come in the name of the Lord, as we rejoice in the plans that come from the heart of God who liberates us from darkness and sin.

REFLECTION

The journey continues, and we can only imagine what Mary thought and felt as she made her way alone to the hill country of Judah to be with her cousin, Elizabeth, in her need.

Along the way her heart is filled with love,
Each step a prayer,
Each mile another mark along the way.

Perhaps she stops at times
to rest her limbs and racing heart
but when the time is right,
she moves in haste.
Perhaps she speaks to no one.
She is as silent as Zechariah,
secluded like Elizabeth.

Elizabeth and Mary meet.
There are blessings and baby kicks,
prophecy and praise,
as two women fill the hills
with the music of love.

We can imagine.

Mary places her palm upon
the baby bump of John,
feels him kick and move.

Elizabeth, too, places her hand in exchange
across the flat stomach of Mary,
each feeling for life.

There is no physical sign yet
but they perceive the presence of God,
so deep that even John,
growing in his mother's womb
for six months now,
leaps for joy.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Let us pray in the name of the Lord, who dwelt in the womb of Mary and comes to us now with his Advent grace.

Intentions

For the Church
that our celebration of Christmas will turn the hearts of all people
to the mystery of the Incarnation.

For our parish community
that we may be ready to share the good news of Christ with those around us.

For those who find it difficult to rejoice
in the midst of their suffering or in a confusing situation
that all who are ill may welcome Christ who comes with healing.

For those who make laws and those who apply them
that they may help to make a fair and just society
where all people can enjoy peace and freedom.

For those who are making an important journey,
and for places of Christian pilgrimage and all who journey to them
that the presence of the Lord will sustain and encourage them.

For the departed
that they may rejoice in the gift of eternal life.

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord God, as Elizabeth and Mary rejoiced in the good news,
we pray that we too may share in their joy,
and echo the song of heaven.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

22ND DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: 1 Samuel 1: 24-28; Luke 1:46-56

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel reading, we hear Mary's song of praise. Let us pray that, like her, we may desire to serve the Lord, so that when he comes he may find us ready to serve him and eager to worship.

REFLECTION

The Magnificat song of Mary from Luke's gospel is said or sung each day at Evening Prayer, so significant are her words that they have become part of the church's repertoire, embedded in her life of daily prayer and worship

They are borrowed words,
those words of Mary,
taken from the heart of Hannah
which burst with song at the sight of her son.

It is a song from the past,
praising God for the gift of a child
that came from a mother's yearning,
a blessing from God.

So, Mary takes this other woman's words to heart,
makes them her own,
moulds them to her own world.

The world is shaken.
Thrones topple, kings fall,
and the poor are lifted to sit
where once they simply kneeled
and begged for bread to eat.

She looks into the past,
deep into the divine story,
sidles up to Abraham,
holds hands with Israel,
shoulder high, so small is she.

The past and present have collided
as they move into a new future
filled with love and promise.

Mary stays there for three months.
Did she leave before the child was born?
Why go now?
Why depart at the dangerous time?
Just when Elizabeth needs her.

Perhaps, this is the moment
she meets John for the first time,
lifts him to his mother
who smells the top of her new-born baby's head,
breathes in the fulfilled promise of God,
looks to Mary,
their eyes locked in love,
so full are they,
so blessed is Mary.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

The Lord shows his mercy to all who are humble and lowly. Through the advent of Christ let us pray for the Church and all people, that they may know the good news of his coming.

Intentions

For the Church
that all Christians may desire the unity of the Church and be a sign of peace to the world.

For the nations of the world
that all who desire peace throughout the world may find their fulfilment in Christ our Saviour.

For the hungry and homeless, the poor and oppressed
that the Lord will come to the help of all who are in need.

For the sick
that the Lord will raise up all who are bowed low with illness or suffering.

For the departed
that all who have died may come to worship forever in the glory of heaven,
for it is the Lord who gives life and death.

Concluding Prayer

Father of all that is good,
as you looked upon Mary and did great things in her life,
look on us also and make us worthy to serve you in the glory of your kingdom.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

23RD DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: Malachi 3:1-4,23-24; Luke 1:57-66

INTRODUCTION

Today we hear of John the Baptist's birth. Elizabeth's neighbours, friends and families rejoice with her in the kindness of the Lord. As we approach Christmas, let us pray that we may share together in the joy that Christ brings.

REFLECTION

His tongue is untwisted.
His speech returns.
He has spent this time,
nine months, in silence.
Long days of seclusion in their hill country home.

There is talk across the heights,
a rumble of wonder,
an echo of love
as they imagine the greatness
this unexpected child will fulfil,
as he fills the world with promise.

Soon, Zechariah's words
will take their place among the talk
which greets this child's birth.
He traces on a stone, 'His name is John,'
Their astonishment a trigger to his twisted tongue,
as words of praise pour out.

Their eyes are on the future now.
Armed with the art of patience,
they wait for all to be disclosed.

In those boyhood years,
as John grows wild to the world
and tamed by the promise of God
they see and will discover how
the hand of God is with him.

This is treasure in their hearts.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to prayer

Christ is our King and the cornerstone of the Church. As we await his coming in glory let us pray for the needs of all people.

Intentions

For the Church
that, in all ages, we may proclaim the reality of Christ's coming.

For the nations of the world
that the lips of all people may be freed to praise God
and worship him in Spirit and in truth.

For all the baptized
that they may realise their name of 'Christian'
and live up to its demands and expectations.

For all married couples
that they may find comfort in sorrow,
strength in trials and the gift of enduring love.

For the sick
that they may know the kindness of the Lord in healing and strength.

For our departed brothers and sisters
that they may share the joy of heaven
as they see our Lord face to face.

Concluding Prayer

Loving God, though the Lord's coming is at hand,
grant us patience to accept
him in his own time and his own way.
Hear our prayers and raise our voices to join the joy of heaven.

WEEKDAYS OF ADVENT

24TH DECEMBER

LECTIONARY: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16; Luke 1:67-79

INTRODUCTION

In today's Gospel, Zechariah is filled with the Holy Spirit and speaks a great prophecy. Let us pray that God's Spirit may fill our lives and help us look to the future with confidence.

REFLECTION

Today, as we stay with the birth of John the Baptist following yesterday's gospel reading, the now unsilenced Zechariah speaks out. Like Mary's Magnificat Song, his words take their place in the church's life of prayer, said or sung each day at Morning Prayer

He holds his child.
A fragile moment,
his arms are frail,
his skin weathered by life.

He looks to Heaven to praise God
and then his life lined face turns
to the bundle of love cradled in his arms,
as in hushed tones he tells of times to come.

He is, in this, like any parent,
predicting adventures,
each word a dream
as they hope for good things.

But for Zechariah,
his angelic vision,
concealed beyond the curtain
cuts through his life.
He speaks into doubt
with the certainty of God.

You will be a prophet,
pulling down mountains,
and raising the planes of sunken souls.
to prepare God's clear way.

His destiny played out in words,
his life planned out before him
long before he was born.
The rising sun will shine, giving light,
and darkness and death will walk hand in hand, embraced by peace.

PRAYER OF THE FAITHFUL

Invitation to Prayer

Christ is the Morning Star who rises over the darkness of the world. As we prepare to celebrate his birth, let us pray for the world, that he may enlighten all people.

Intentions

For the Church
that we may give people knowledge of salvation.

For friends who have journeyed to celebrate Christmas with family and relations
that they may have a safe journey and a peaceful season.

For all who work through the Christmas season
that they may have time to glimpse something of the Mystery of Christ.

For those who live in the darkness of suffering or in the shadow of death
that they may be enlightened by Christ, the Morning Star.

For those in our parish who celebrate Christmas in a Nursing or Residential Home
that they may experience the peace and joy of Christ.

For the departed
that they may be raised to the joy of Christ's kingdom.

For ourselves
that we may have a holy and peaceful Christmas.

Concluding Prayer

Good and loving God,
as Advent draws to a close,
and the darkness of the world
gives way to the shining brilliance of your Son,
help us to celebrate Christmas with true joy,
and raise us up to share the glory of your kingdom.