

Waiting for salvation and renewal

'Prepare a way for the Lord.'

—Luke 3:4

BE STILL

Light two candles on your Advent wreath. Or if you don't have a wreath, light a special candle.

We watch and wait.

To this waiting time we bring the experiences of the year past.

This circle of green reminds us of the love of God: endless, but ever new.

Take a moment to allow whatever is in your heart to rise, and offer your thoughts to the loving care of the Lord in this second week of Advent. Our thoughts may turn to the year that has passed:

- For what am I thankful?
- What could I have done better?
- How have I journeyed with God and Jesus throughout the past year?

This week

Tuesday 7 December:
St Ambrose, priest, doctor (memorial)

Wednesday 8 December:
The Immaculate Conception
of the Blessed Virgin Mary (solemnity)

Listen or sing

Sing or listen to 'In the Lord I'll be ever thankful' (CWBII 522; GA 429).

Alternatively, you could sing or listen to 'Wait for the Lord' (CWBII 251, GA 83).

Pray

Loving God,

*Awaken our hearts as we keep this Advent time;
allow us to draw near to you
and to sit in your presence.*

*Awaken our hearts as we keep this Advent time:
that we may listen more deeply to your word in our lives
and make room for Emmanuel.*

Amen.

OPEN THE WORD

Read

A reading from the holy Gospel according to Luke.

In the fifteenth year of the rule of Tiberius Caesar, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the territories of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high-priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, the son of Zechariah, in the desert. He went into the whole Jordan area proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of Isaiah the prophet:

A voice of one crying in the desert:

Prepare a way for the Lord,

make his paths straight!

Every valley shall be filled in,

every mountain and hill be levelled,

the crooked shall be straightened

and rough places made into smooth roads,

and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

—Luke 3:1–6

The Gospel of the Lord.

Ponder

In his encyclical *Evangelii Gaudium* (*The Joy of the Gospel*), Pope Francis commends the practice of *lectio divina*, where we read God's word in prayer, dwelling on the aspects of a text that particularly strike us and asking that it 'enlighten and renew' us. The following questions may help with this:

- Lord, what does this text mean to me?
- What is it about my life that you want me to change in response to this text?
- What troubles me about this text?
- Why am I not interested in this?
- What do I find pleasant about this text?
- What is it about this word or phrase that moves me?
- What attracts me?
- Why does it attract me?

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Pope's prayer intention for the month of December: Catechists

'Let us pray for the catechists summoned to announce the Word of God; may they be witnesses, with courage and creativity and in the power of the Holy Spirit.'

As we hold this intention in our hearts and prayers, we may also like to pray for all those who, in a particular way, dedicate their time to sharing and teaching the Word of God to others—parents, teachers, clergy, parish volunteers and others.

Reflect

It feels as though we are coming full circle. Earlier this year, on the first Sunday of Lent, we read from the beginning of Mark's gospel that Jesus was driven into the wilderness (Mark 1:12–15). Now, at the start of the new liturgical year, the Gospel of Luke returns us to the wilderness. We are on a journey with John the Baptist, who, drawing from his Jewish heritage, exhorts us to listen and 'prepare!'

In recent months, we have been invited to 'Take the Way of the Gospel', reimagining our local Church as Mission communities through a time of prayer, listening and discernment. We have been encouraged to listen to the Spirit, to pray, to reflect deeply and to share with each other what we think God is asking of us at this time in our parishes and in the Archdiocese. Perhaps this is something we can build into the pattern of our Advent days: What is it that God is asking of me? What is it that God is asking of us? How is the Holy Spirit calling us into a renewed way of being in our local Church?

Perhaps the words of Henri Nouwen will help with this: 'Our God is a God who cares, heals, guides, directs, challenges, confronts, corrects. To discern means first of all to listen to God, to pay attention to God's active presence, and to obey God's prompting, direction, leadings, and guidance' (Henri JM Nouwen, *Discernment: Reading the Signs of Daily Life*, SPCK, 2013).

RESPOND

Pray

Loving God,
As we keep this Advent time,
awaken our hearts to goodness and hope.
Help us to hear your voice.
Strengthen our voices as we work towards building
a world where justice reigns.
Through Christ, our Lord,
Amen.



Saint John the Baptist in the Wilderness by Geertgen tot Sint Jans

Go out

Pope Francis prays throughout December that those summoned to announce the Word of God do so with courage and creativity, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. This week, in particular, we celebrate the Feast of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Even before her birth, the Holy Spirit was working intimately in God's plan for the salvation of the world. The power of the Holy Spirit calls us, too, into God's plan of salvation. Take some time this week to be the face of Christ to those you know who are busy with young families: you might like to provide a meal or other practical assistance, or just offer encouragement and a listening ear. Be the one who hears 'a voice crying out in the desert'.