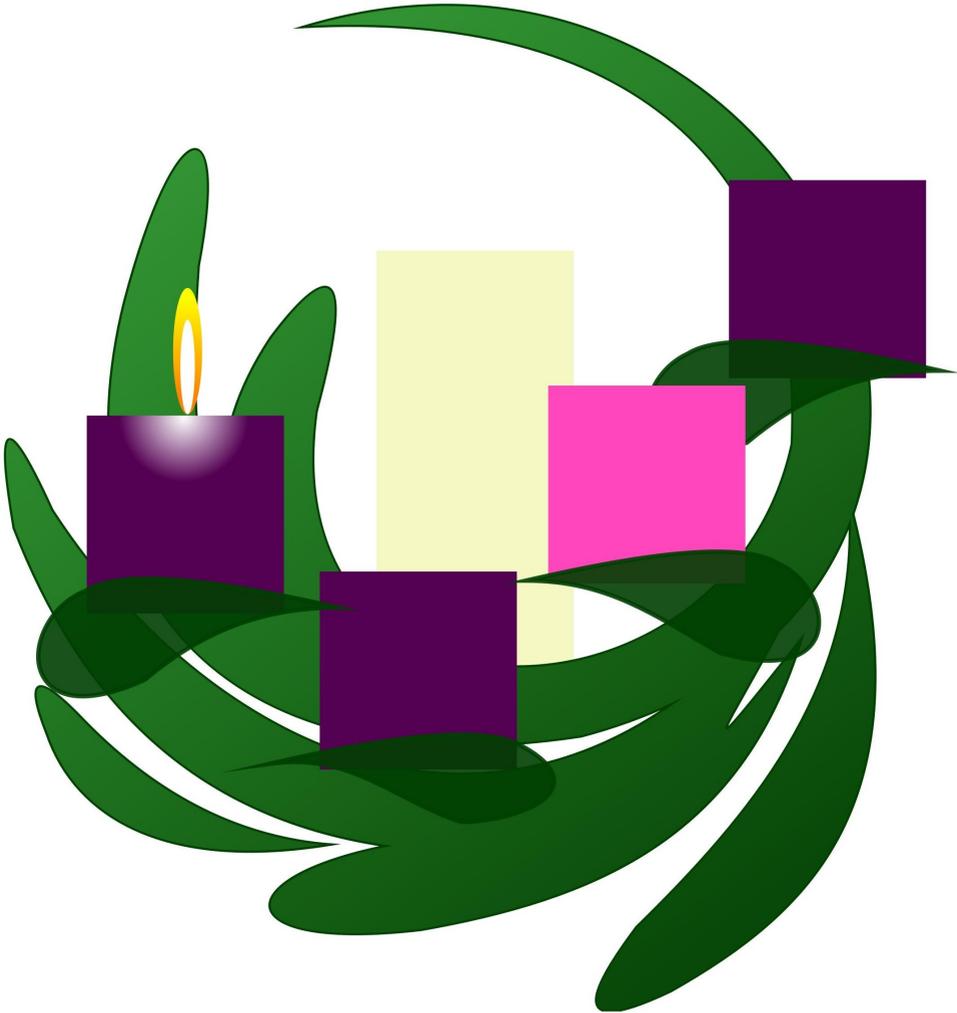


Reflecting
on the First Sunday of Advent



Archdiocese of
Liverpool

Prepare to be attentive to *The God Who Speaks in this story.*



- Light a candle or tea light if possible.
- Perhaps place a flower from the garden or a plant next to the light.

Let us begin our time of prayer for the First Sunday of Advent:

Breathe deeply and allow yourself to become still.

Let the music help you to relax. Ask for God's grace and light to fill your heart and your mind as you open to the Word.



To you, I lift up my soul, O Lord my God.
In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame.
Nor let my enemies exult over me;
and let none who hope in you be put to shame.



Spend some time just looking at the three images.

- Where is your eye drawn to?
- What feelings are you experiencing?
- What are you noticing?



HM Government 



CORONAVIRUS ALERT FOR LEICESTER

If you live in the city and suburbs
of Leicester, you must:

- ▶ Stay home as much as possible
- ▶ Always keep 2 metres apart if you go out
- ▶ Keep washing your hands regularly
- ▶ Get tested the moment you get symptoms;
and only leave home to get tested

Go to leicester.gov.uk/coronavirus

STAY ALERT ▶ CONTROL THE VIRUS ▶ SAVE LIVES



Pray the Responsorial Psalm for today.



God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

O shepherd of Israel, hear us,
shine forth from your cherubim throne.
O Lord, rouse up your might,
O Lord, come to our help.

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

God of hosts, turn again, we implore,
look down from heaven and see.
Visit this vine and protect it,
the vine your right hand has planted.

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

May your hand be on the man you have chosen,
the man you have given your strength.
And we shall never forsake you again;
give us life that we may call upon your name.

God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

Now, either read slowly to yourself this story from the Gospel according to Mark or better still, read it aloud, again slowly.

From the Gospel according to Mark 13:33-37



Jesus said "Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the door-keeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."

The Gospel of the Lord.

Spend a few moments allowing some aspect of the Gospel – a word/phrase or image – to touch you more deeply and read this part a second time, aloud if possible.

This reflection is from Chris Thomas of the Irenaeus Project.



I had been University Chaplain for about five years. It was a pressurised job with lots of demands and certainly during term time not a lot of time for rest. One particular Sunday I was preaching whilst holding a pencil in my hands. As I preached, the pencil broke, and I couldn't go on. I started to cry and had to leave Mass. I was in the throes of a deep depression. Events moved very quickly after that. My friends intervened and I found myself sitting in front of one of our bishops who told me that I had two options. The first was that I could take control and find myself someone to help me, or the Diocese would find me someone to talk to. I was not about to let others take control, so on advice from someone I found myself a therapist.

I can still remember the first day that I drove to Chester to see her. I cried all the way there and nearly backed out, twice turning the car round and starting for home. Somehow, I arrived outside the house where she practised and eventually found myself sitting opposite a warm kindly woman. She looked at me and said, 'Why have you come?'

Abigail was put into my life to help me through the darkness. Her sharing with me helped me to see things differently and make the changes that I had to make in my life. I was challenged to let go and move on and see things differently. Often, she would ask the question, "Where is your God in this?" I was moved to a deeper level of faith and personal awareness because of her.

Most of us will have had encounters with people that have changed our perceptions, enabled us to move on to a new stage in life. The Gospel is essentially about an encounter. It's an encounter with another person, it's an encounter with love. It's an encounter that changes us and begins the process of transformation within us. It always strikes me that whenever there is a real encounter with Jesus, change takes place. There is new awareness, new awakening and new sight. It seems to me that the call of the Gospel is to be open to the gift of meeting the Lord who is always present. That's the transforming moment. The moment of meeting is the one which revolutionises our inner being and that's a present reality. That's the reality of the Kingdom of God. The kingdom isn't about the future when we get to heaven, but about the present moment and living that moment to the full, even the moments that are sad and painful.

In the Gospel we've listened to Jesus urging us to keep awake. Firstly, he illustrates that invitation with some Old Testament images of Noah and the flood, and then with familiar images of women grinding corn, one taken and one left. What's that about? Going to hell if we're not ready? Having to live a good moral life to appease God, who only likes those who live in that way? No! It's typically rabbinic language, going to an extreme to make a point. Yes, it's pointing us to the future when the Lord will return, but for me It's to do with being open to the grace of this moment; the moment of meeting the Lord, and so living in the Kingdom, because of his power and his love that we receive. That can't happen if we're caught up in the past or the future. It can only happen in this moment. It's a call to live in the present moment and meet the forever coming God. I think Advent is a great time for reflecting on the present moment. This is because it is the time of waiting that the Church invites us into. You can't really wait in the past or the future. You can only wait in the here and now, and if we wait with joyful hope in this moment, then the Lord most surely will come.

Listen to *Wait for the Lord*.



Wait for the Lord, whose day is near.
Wait for the Lord, keep watch, take heart.

Take a few moments to receive and reflect on this poem by Rowan Williams, a former Archbishop of Canterbury.



Advent Calendar

He will come like last leaf's fall.
One night when the November wind
has flayed the trees to the bone, and earth
wakes choking on the mould,
the soft shroud's folding.

He will come like frost.
One morning when the shrinking earth
opens on mist, to find itself
arrested in the net
of alien, sword-set beauty.

He will come like dark.
One evening when the bursting red
December sun draws up the sheet
and penny-masks its eye to yield
the star-snowed fields of sky.

He will come, will come,
will come like crying in the night,
like blood, like breaking,
as the earth writhes to toss him free.
He will come like child.

**As a result of your reflection, offer some prayers
of intercession for the people and situations in
our world today that seem to you to be most in
need.**

*Let's begin with the prayer Archbishop Malcolm has asked
us to pray at this time and then you may like to include
one or more of prayers that follow and/or add your own:*



God Our Father,
each person is precious to You.
You are the Giver of life.
Have mercy on us and protect us at this time,
as the coronavirus threatens health and life.
You are an ever-present Helper in time of trouble.
Watch over those who are suffering,
give strength to those who are aiding the sick
and give courage to all in this time of anxiety.
We ask this of you in the name of your Son.
Jesus Christ.
Amen.

For the Christian Church throughout the world ... that we all grow in our appreciation of all that the Incarnation means for us.
Lord hear us ...

For those finding continuing lockdown restrictions particularly challenging ... may they find compassionate listeners readily available and experience a deeper sense of connectedness.

For carers who look after loved ones who are terminally ill ... that they may find strength, courage and consolation in their difficult task.

We pray for those awaiting operations who now have received extended waiting times ... that they will be given the support they need during that waiting time.

For those grieving the loss of a loved one after a long period of illness ... that they may be supported by family and friends and know the peace of God's loving embrace.

We pray now in the words Jesus gave us:

Our Father,
who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come,
thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread,
and forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us;
and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.

To end your time of reflection listen to *Awake, O people.*



Awake, O people for the Lord is near.
Awake, O people for the Lord is near.
Get ready, Get ready.
Get ready for the Lord is near.
Get ready, Get ready.
Get ready for the Lord is near.

Be on your guard; you never know when the time will come.
Stay awake, stay awake.

Acknowledgements

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