

**TRINITY
CHURCH**
WALL
STREET

Advent Prayers & Devotions

2020



The First Sunday of Advent

November 29, 2020

Isaiah 64:1-9 | Psalm 80:1-7, 16-18 | 1 Corinthians 1:3-9 | Mark 13:24-37

Lighting the Advent Wreath

Gather around your advent wreath(s) as a household. Take a moment to breathe. Read through one or more of the readings. Maybe sing a song. Choose a Leader or read for yourself:

Leader Advent is a season of expectation: a time when we prepare our hearts and spirits for the birth of Jesus. Each week in Advent, we light another candle in our wreath. As it becomes brighter and brighter, it helps us remember that Jesus brings the light and love of God into the world.

Light the first purple candle.

Reader Jesus is coming! We light the first candle, which represents hope.
All **God, give us hope! Amen.**

Reflection

The Rev. Matt Welsch

Grace and Peace | St. Paul knew he needed to write a difficult letter to his friends in Corinth. The church in Corinth was having a difficult time. They were arguing a lot. They were deeply divided. Their members came from different backgrounds, with different gifts and beliefs. They argued about justice and worship. They were experiencing a lot of uncertainty. St. Paul wanted to remind them that even though they were experiencing these arguments and division, they were *one community*. One body in Jesus. He wanted to remind them that their diversity is what made them good and beautiful and holy in the eyes of God. But he knew it might be a difficult thing for them to hear. So he chose to begin his letter with these beautiful words: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Cor. 1:3).

This advent, many of us are also experiencing uncertainty, division, and worry. Living in New York City in 2020 feels, in many ways, a lot like living in ancient Corinth. Advent is the yearly reminder that God looked at the world *exactly* as it is and fell deeply, madly in love with us. Every single one of us. God fell so recklessly in love with us, that God decided to “tear open the heavens and come down” as the Prophet Isaiah sang (Isa. 64:1-9). God sent God’s only son to take on flesh and blood in Jesus, to live and die rise again with and for us. Jesus, who again and again shows us God’s grace, peace, and love. Advent reminds us that, no matter how messy, imperfect, or broken you might feel, God loves you with a deep, reckless, powerful love. God’s love can transform our lives, our communities, our world.

So, this Advent: may you know the grace and peace of God, revealed to us in Jesus. And may God rekindle your hope for a better, even more beautiful world.

The Second Sunday of Advent

December 6, 2020

Isaiah 40:1-11 | Psalm 85:1-2, 8-13 | 2 Peter 3:8-15a | Mark 1:1-8

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Light the first and second purple candles.

Reader Jesus is coming! We light the second candle, which represents faith.
All **God, give us faith! Amen.**

Reflection

Bob Scott

“Comfort, O comfort my people, says your God.” Isaiah’s tender words contrast starkly with previous 39 chapters, where he scolded the people harshly. Their failings had nothing to do with religious rites. They sinned by ignoring God’s call for justice. The haves in their society clung to their privilege and the have nots suffered. Corrupt leaders ignored the plight of the vulnerable. The prophet warned that such a society cannot stand, and it didn’t. The crisis came.

In exile, the people wondered whether they had a future. This year, when a pandemic that can feel like a biblical plague has revealed societal inequities that Isaiah would recognize, we might have the same question. Advent assures us that our future is in God’s hands and is likely to emerge from where we least expect. A recent *New York Times* article described the original meaning of the word “crisis” as a medical term referring to “the decisive juncture in the course of a disease, after which the patient either dies or begins to recover.” The exile could have led to death but instead ushered in a long period of rebirth. The people were able to find new life when they shifted their focus from preserving their privilege to living their vocation to “bring forth justice to the nations” (Is. 42:1).

As we prepare to receive “the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God” (Mark 1:1), we need to ask what we’ve been clinging to that we need to give up. At the same time, let’s open our eyes to signs of hope and change. Where do we see “the uneven ground become level”? This week, what can you photograph that you’re ready to let go of? Can you find news stories and personal anecdotes that speak to an emerging, more just future? Take time to reflect on those things and share them with others.

The Third Sunday of Advent

December 13, 2020

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11 | Canticle 15: The Song of Mary | 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24 | John 1:6-8,19-28

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Light the first and second purple candles. Then light the pink candle.

Reader Jesus is coming! We light the third candle, which represents joy.
All **God, give us joy! Amen.**

Reflection

Kathryn Carroll

The promise of the imminent arrival of a Messiah is the Advent theme this week. On the third Sunday, many denominations observe a tradition of lighting a pink candle in the Advent Wreath, which represents joy. Advent was, until fairly recently, a time of solemn reflection, more like Lent, with a little reprieve only on the third Sunday. We formation folks try to find a balance between those deeper practices and fun, especially with children. And I admit that I had little will to dwell on the bleakness of midwinter when my own child was young. Still, I have some anecdotal evidence that children somehow intuit the contrasts and inextricability of sadness and its capacity for joy that is inherent in our liturgies, and perhaps, in our human DNA.

In the readings, joy is prophesied and celebrated for ending sadness or suffering. We don't often hear of joy in the reverse order; with joy leading into sorrow. But I was remembering a Christmas day, when my son was maybe seven. Toward evening time, I noticed him becoming uncharacteristically melancholy. I asked him what was the matter? He said, "I think I love Advent more than Christmas. Getting ready, and excited, the Pageant, our tree, and everyone visiting ... and everything -- but then on Christmas, it's over... for a whole 'nother year. I miss it already!" Transitions were challenging for him and he never liked endings. And at first, I thought that's what his grief was about. But it was such a rare moment of serious introspection for him that it felt deeper. I think it indicated that he was beginning to recognize on some level, that the anticipatory times don't really come to an end, but are as much a part of the process of incarnation as the birth day, and all of the days following. As we orbit around our star; joy and sadness; love and fear; peace and conflict; hope and lament, cycle the seasons along with us as well.

This week: Sing, dance, and play with joyful music. Find Christmas carols or other music about joy, or that make you feel joyful. Make a playlist or get out your instruments and have a Carol sing-along, or have a dance party with your family at home - or extend your joy, virtually.

The Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 20, 2020

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16 | Canticle 15: The Song of Mary | Romans 16: 25-27 | Luke 1: 26-38

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Light the first two purple candles and the pink candle. Then light the third purple candle.

Reader Jesus is coming! We light the fourth candle, which represents peace.
All **God, give us peace! Amen.**

Reflection

Dr. Kathy Bozzuti-Jones

Visio Divina on the Annunciation | *Visio Divina* means sacred seeing. It is a spiritual practice similar to *lectio divina*, using imagery. This week, Advent IV, is a time to think about the annunciation of the Angel Gabriel to Mary and her courageous response. As you spend some quiet time gazing on this abstract contemporary image on the following page, ask God for guidance about its meaning for your spiritual life. You might want to journal about what you notice about the painting and what feelings arise, as you imagine yourself into the scene of the angel's visit to Mary.

For Reflection as we approach Christmas:

- If Mary looks a bit uncertain in her encounter with the angel, her resolute "O.K." that followed suggests that she had been preparing all her life to receive the presence of God. **Is there something in your life that needs your brave "yes" in order for you to grow?**
- In times of uncertainty, we may not know what lies ahead, but we can always know that God is seeking a space in our lives. **What am I doing to invite God into my life?**
- The Medieval mystic, Meister Eckhart wrote: "We are all mothers of God, for God is always needing to be born." **How do you understand these mysterious words? What could they mean for you?**
- **Practice bringing God into the world this week.** What will you do? Here's a **breath practice** to support your actions: When you **breathe in**, say to yourself, "I invite you into my life, loving God." When you **breathe out**, say, "I offer your love for the healing of the world."



“The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the house of David, and the virgin’s name was Mary. And coming to her, he said, “Hail, favored one! The Lord is with you.”

Luke 1: 26-28

Roz Dimon, pioneer in the art of digital collage, spent three years creating a meditation on the Annunciation with hundreds of layers for prayerful reflection. Here is one layer. Source image is from a 12th c. icon from St. Catherine of Sinai Monastery, Egypt. Used with permission.