Prepare the Way

2019 Advent Devotions
This Advent Devotion was created by Mr. Scott Perry and Fr. John Wallace.

It is intended to be used along with your Bible and the companion podcast available at ApostlesByTheSea.com/Advent and in your favorite podcast app.

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The Season of Advent

The word Advent comes from the Latin Adventus and simply means coming or arrival. The Season of Advent begins four Sundays before Christmas. It’s a time for God’s people around the world to prepare for the celebration of the coming of Christ; a coming that we recall in the Child of Bethlehem; a coming that we experience in the gift of his Spirit, and in the bread and wine of Holy Eucharist, and in the joy of human lives that are shared; and a coming we await when God will at last gather up all things in Christ Jesus.

Advent, therefore, is a time of remembering and rejoicing, of watching and waiting, of longing and loving, of wonder and of hope.
The First Week of Advent

The Hymn of the Week

Come, Thou Long Expected Jesus

Words: Charles Wesley (1707-1788)  Music: Stuttgart, melody from Psalmodia Sacra, oder Andächtige und Schöne Gesange, 1715; adapt. William Henry Havergal (1793-1870)

The Collect of the Week

Almighty God, give us grace to cast away the works of darkness, and put on the armor of light, now in the time of this mortal life in which your Son Jesus Christ came to visit us in great humility; that in the last day, when he shall come again in his glorious majesty to judge both the living and the dead, we may rise to the life immortal; through him who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
Reflection on this week’s readings:
The First Sunday of Advent sets the tone for the season by looking forward to the second coming of Jesus Christ. That expectation begins in the Old Testament and Psalm readings which show that the Messiah comes in peace-making judgment. This dual purpose is depicted most beautifully in Isaiah 2 where the Lord comes in judgment, yet also ushers in a time of peace:

“He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide disputes for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore”. (Isaiah 2:4)

God is not the only one who is actively working in this time between the first and second advent. The New Testament and Gospel readings call Christians to be actively watching and waiting for Christ’s return, while also evaluating their lives on the basis of Christ’s first coming. We are reminded to “stay awake” (Matt 24:42-44) and also called to “cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light” (Rom 13:12). This call is expressed in the collect for the week.

Sunday, December 1, 2019
Readings  Isaiah 2:1-5
           Psalm 122
           Romans 13:11-14
           Matthew 24:36-44

Monday, December 2, 2019
Reading   Matthew 21:1-11

Tuesday, December 3, 2019
Reading   Matthew 21:12-22

Wednesday, December 4, 2019
Reading   2 Peter 3:1-10

Thursday, December 5, 2019
Reading   2 Peter 3:11-18

Friday, December 6, 2019
Reading   Jude 1-8

Saturday, December 7, 2019
Reading   Jude 17-25
The Second Week of Advent

The Hymn of the Week

Prepare the Way, O Zion!

Words: Frans Mikael Franzen (1772-1847); tr. composite; adapt. Charles P. Price (1920-1999)
Music: Beredan väg för Herran, 1697

1 Prepare the way, O Zion, your Christ is drawing near!
2 He brings God’s rule, O Zion; he comes from heaven above.
3 Fling wide your gates, O Zion; your Savior’s rule embrace.

Let every hill and valley a level way appear.
His rule is peace and freedom, and justice, truth, and love.
His tidings of salvation proclaim in every place.

Greet One who comes in glory, foretold in sacred story.
Lift high your praise resounding, for grace and joy abounding.
All lands will bow before him, their voices will adore him.

Oh, blest is Christ that came in God’s most holy name.

The Collect of the Week

Merciful God, who sent your messengers the prophets to preach repentance
and prepare the way for our salvation: Give us grace to heed their warnings
and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ our
Redeemer; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and
for ever. Amen.
The Messiah Is Coming

Reflection on this week’s readings:
The Second week of Advent continues on the themes of first week, where we read of Christ’s coming in judgment, but a judgment that is finalized in peace. The themes are depicted in Psalm 72 and Isaiah 11. In addition, Isaiah’s description of the messianic king coming forth from the stump of Jesse is a beautiful picture of how God works to bring new life out of death. Today’s readings also highlight the inclusion of Gentiles into God’s family (Romans 15), and the church’s hopeful expectation of the completion of God’s promises. This week is also marked by a focus on the prophets, especially John the Baptist, who preaches a baptism of repentance (Matthew 3). The call to repentance is a call to forsake our sins and is expressed in the Collect for the Second week of Advent as we pray for the “grace to heed [the prophets’] warnings and forsake our sins, that we may greet with joy the coming of Jesus Christ”

Sunday, December 8, 2019
Readings  Isaiah 11:1-10
           Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19
           Romans 15:4-13
           Matthew 3:1-12

Monday, December 9, 2019
Reading  Revelation 1:1-8

Tuesday, December 10, 2019
Reading  Matthew 22:34-46

Wednesday, December 11, 2019
Reading  Revelation 1:17-2:7

Thursday, December 12, 2019
Reading  Psalm 37:1-18

Friday, December 13, 2019
Reading  Matthew 23:27-39

Saturday, December 14, 2019
Reading  Haggai 2:1-9
The Third Week of Advent

The Hymn of the Week

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel!

1 O come, O come, Em-man-u-el, and ransom
2 captive Is-ra-el, that mourns in lonely ex-ile
3 here un-til the Son of God ap-pear.
4 Em-man-u-el shall come to thee, O Is-ra-el!
5 wide our heaven-ly home; make safe the way that leads on
6 high, and close the path to mis-er-y. Re-joice! Re-joice!

Words: Latin, ca. 9th cent.; ver. Hymnal 1940. Music: Veni, veni, Emmanuel, plainsong, Mode 1, Processionale, 15th cent.; adapt. Thomas Helmore (1811-1890)

The Collect of the Week

Stir up your power, O Lord, and with great might come among us; and, because we are sorely hindered by our sins, let your bountiful grace and mercy speedily help and deliver us; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory, now and for ever. Amen.
Rejoice!

Reflection on this week’s readings:
The Scripture readings for the Third Sunday of Advent give cause for rejoicing as they reflect on the salvation and restoration Jesus brings. When Jesus returns, the effects of sin’s curse will be removed. We see this reversal in Isaiah 35 and Psalm 146, where we read that the dry land will blossom, streams will come forth from the desert, the blind will see, the deaf will hear, the oppressed will see justice, the hungry will be fed, and the downcast will be lifted up. What was prophesied becomes fulfilled, and in Matthew 11 we read Jesus’ message to John the Baptist: “Go and tell John what you hear and see: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have good news brought to them. This is indeed reason for rejoicing, and as the Proper Preface for Advent tells us, when Christ comes again we’ll have even more reasons to rejoice.

Proper Preface for Advent:
Because you sent your beloved Son to redeem us from sin and death, and to make us heirs in him of everlasting life; that when he shall come again in power and great glory to judge the world, we may without shame or fear rejoice to behold his appearing.

Sunday, December 15, 2019
Readings Isaiah 35:1-10
Psalm 146:5-10
James 5:7-10
Matthew 11:2-11

Monday, December 16, 2019
Reading Revelation 3:7-13

Tuesday, December 17, 2019
Reading Psalm 47

Wednesday, December 18, 2019
Reading Revelation 4:1-8

Thursday, December 19, 2019
Reading Zephaniah 3:14-20

Friday, December 20, 2019
Reading Isaiah 9:1-7

Saturday, December 21, 2019
Reading Luke 1:26-38
The Fourth Week of Advent

The Hymn of the Week

Once in Royal David’s City

Words: Cecil Francis Alexander (1818-1895)  Music: Henry John Gauntlett (1805-1876); harm. Arthur Henry Mann (1850-1929)

1 Once in royal David’s city stood a lowly stable shed, where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed: Mary stable, and his cradle was a stall; with the help less is our Lord in heaven above; and he heaven, where his saints his throne surround: Christ, re -

2 He came down to earth from heaven, who is own redeeming love; for that child who seemed so oxen standing round, we shall see him; but in poor, the scorned, the lowly, lived on earth our Savior holy. leads his children on to the place where he is gone. vealed to faith ful eye, set at God’s right hand on high.

3 And our eyes at last shall see him, through his oxen standing round, we shall see him; but in

4 Not in that poor lowly stable, with the lowly cattle shed, where a mother laid her baby in a manger for his bed: Mary stable, and his cradle was a stall; with the help less is our Lord in heaven above; and he heaven, where his saints his throne surround: Christ, re -

The Collect of the Week

Purify our conscience, Almighty God, by your daily visitation, that your Son Jesus Christ, at his coming, may find in us a mansion prepared for himself; who lives and reigns with you, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, one God, now and for ever. Amen.
God Keeps His Promises

Reflection on this week’s readings:
On the Fourth Sunday of Advent, we celebrate God’s faithfulness in sending His Son, and we remember God’s faithfulness as we look forward to Christ’s second coming. Sunday’s readings focus on the coming of the Messiah who fulfills God’s covenant with David, brings salvation for all people, and ushers in the eternal reign of God on earth. God promises that he will make for David a great name, give his people eternal rest from enemies, and give him an everlasting kingdom (Isaiah 7:9). These promises are fulfilled in the coming of Jesus, who was “declared to be Son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:2). The good news is that God has been faithful to his promise in sending Jesus Christ, and in the Gospel reading we see this promise fulfilled: “Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel,” which means, “God is with us.” (Matthew 1:23, from Isaiah 7:14). God keeps his promises!

Sunday, December 22, 2019
Readings
Isaiah 7:10-16
Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19
Romans 1:1-7
Matthew 1:18-25

Monday, December 23, 2019
Reading
Luke 1:46-55

Tuesday, December 24, 2019
Reading
Matthew 1:18-25

Collect for Christmas Eve:
O God, you have caused this holy night to shine with the brightness of the true Light: Grant that we, who have known the mystery of that Light on earth, may also enjoy him perfectly in heaven; where with you and the Holy Spirit he lives and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.
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