



Conversations of Faith Blog

Special Advent Edition



The Season of Advent

“as we wait in joyful hope”

By Timothy Andries, November 28, 2021

“Deliver us, Lord, from every evil, and grant us peace in our day. In your mercy keep us free from sin and protect us from all anxiety as we wait in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour, Jesus Christ”. (Roman Liturgy after the doxology)

Introduction

1. The word “advent” comes from the Latin word “*adventus*”, meaning arrival or approach. For us as Christians, the Advent season has a double meaning, it is the commemoration of the birth of Jesus Christ and waiting for His glorious return. Like our Jewish predecessors, we’re called to read the signs of the times and look for the coming of the Lord. Advent and Christmas for that matter are not commemorations of isolated distant events. On the one hand, we do celebrate the coming of the one true Priest, Prophet, and King who ushered in the Kingdom of God on earth. We celebrate the long-awaited Lord and Savior who would teach us the good news of our salvation from sin. On the other hand, in the age of the Church, we wait for the fulfillment of that kingdom and the final return of the Lord.

The First Sunday of Advent

"Light the Flame of Hope"



"The days are coming, says the Lord, when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel". (Jer 33:14)

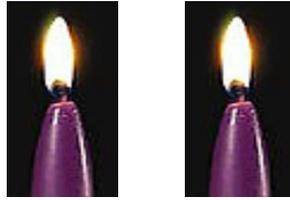
2. In the first reading, the Prophet Jeremiah reminds the people of Israel that the *"days are coming"* when the Lord will send the Messiah and establish God's peace and justice among men and women. It is a message of hope, to never forget that God will fulfill His promises.

3. Hope is the certainty that events will turn out for the best. St Thomas Aquinas described hope as *"a movement of the appetite toward a greater good"*. (*Theology for the Laity, vol 62 No. 6*). So what is it we are hoping for? The better question would be, who are we hoping in? Should it not be our hope that Our Lord comes and guides His people? Our hearts should cry out with the Psalmist... *"your ways, O Lord, make known to me"* (*Psalm 25*). Our lives in the 21st century are screaming for guidance and truth. We live in a time when "doing the right thing" is more of a challenge clouded by uncertainty. People are hungry for a life of meaning and direction.

4. In the Gospel, Our Lord admonishes us to stay vigilant and not lose hope, *"Be vigilant at all times, pray you have the strength"*(*Lk 21:36*). Hope in Jesus Christ is the trust that His will be done. Hope is the trust that no matter how off-track our society or our lives have become, Our Lord will not abandon us. As the first candle is lit, let it remind us that even in dark times we can see signs of hope. We see this hope in the faithful, in people who keep the faith, who pray and continue to bring the Gospel of Christ to others. It's not easy, especially in trying times. It's tempting to want to give up. Pray then in this first week of Advent for an increase in hope and ask Our Lord to show us the signs that His Kingdom is growing. We need the patience and strength to wait on the Lord.

The Second Sunday of Advent

“Light the Flame of Faith”



“Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight”. (Lk 3:4)

5. The second week of Advent is a call to faith in Jesus Christ. Faith is *“submitting the mind and will to God” (CCC #143)*. In the Gospel for the second Sunday, John the Baptist is telling us to prepare for the Lord. It is our faith that marks out the path to redemption. It is by repenting of our former ways that allow Our Lord to make our paths straight.

6. There are many reasons and situations that can challenge our faith. We can find ourselves wondering through what seems like a deep valley with no way out. Maybe we have family or personal situations that stand like intimidating mountains that seem impossible to climb over or get around. We feel overwhelmed at times, even to the point of hopelessness. At times we don't know who to trust or who to believe.

7. The Baptist is quoting the prophet, Isaiah. It's the prophecy given to Israel after their exile. The filling of valleys and leveling of mountains is not the imagery of the wrath of Divine Judgment, instead, it's consolation. Faith is believing that the Lord Himself will level the mountains that block His path, He will fill the valley to lift us from the darkness to light. In doing so, the Lord Himself will clear a path to find His children to rescue them.

8. No one goes from sinner to saint in 60 seconds flat! The Lord God is patient and merciful, so we too need to be patient and merciful. We need this with our interactions with others, but also at times with ourselves. Through repentance, (see the Gospel second week of Advent), we are given the grace to overcome the mountains and valleys in our lives that impede the Lord's path

*The Third Sunday of Advent
"Light the Flame of Joy"*



"The LORD has removed the judgment against you..... the King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst," (Zeph 3:14-18, the first reading)

9. The Advent of Hope, Faith, and now Joy. We may ask, what joy can be found in times like these? The first reading from the Prophet Zephaniah gives the first part of that answer. Our society is angry and at times despairing. What will bring us happiness in a world with so many false promises? The first reading tells us that the Lord has removed the judgment against us and that the Lord Himself is in our midst.

10. This joy that we speak of is not a utopian numbing of the senses or mere sentiment. The joy we have is knowing that the Lord God is here among us. In a society that has lost its way, we have through Christ, been given the way. In a time of uncertainty, through Christ, we have the truth. In today's "throw-away-culture" we've been given through Christ, the life.

11. The Lord comes to us not to condemn, but to save and redeem. He comes as a savior to be our *"strength and courage"*. (See *Responsorial Psalm*). Today it's easy to become impatient and wonder how long must we suffer in this world of ours. Who can we turn to? In the second reading St Paul gives another reason for this advent joy. He says *"by prayer and petition, make your request known to God"*. (Phil 4:4-7). The source of our hope and joy is the Lord Himself who waits for our prayers and petitions, we have nothing to fear. In our joy, we need to remember that when it seems as though God is "taking His sweet time", He has not forgotten us. We should always remember that with the advent of Christ, He is always near.

12. *"He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire"*. (Gospel, Lk 3:10-18). Perhaps a more direct source of joy is John the Baptist's words in the Gospel for the 3rd week of Advent. Jesus came to baptize us with the Holy Spirit. We have the joy of knowing that through baptism, we have been reborn as children of God and made members of His Mystical Body, the Church, and made sharers in His mission, (see CCC #1213). This advent, let us reflect on what the joy and reality of our baptism mean. As we wait for the Lord's return, how have I lived out my baptismal mission and faith?

*The Fourth Sunday of Advent
“Light the Flame of Peace”*



“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken by the Lord would be fulfilled”. (Lk 1:39-45)

13. The Gospel for the fourth Sunday of Advent ends with these words, *“Blessed are you who believed”*. The peace of God is our blessing, one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit infused into the soul at baptism. In the Beatitudes, Our Lord says, *“ Blessed are the peacemakers for they shall be called children of God”*. (Mt 5:9). The peace that we have received does not come from political parties, social media, or anything the world has to offer. This peace that we call to mind at Advent is the peace in the soul that comes from being reconciled as children of God.

14. With hope, faith, and the joy of Christ, we find peace within ourselves. Peace is the reconciliation that Christ established between humanity and the Father. In the first reading from Michah, we see that the Lord comes to us as a ruler and shepherd. Christ the Good Shepherd came to return proper order between men and women and between humanity and God. In calling us to share in that mission, we become the tools, assisted by grace, by which God’s peace is established on earth.

15. In the last week of Advent we wait for the fulfillment of the Annunciation, the arrival of Emmanuel or God With Us. In our day, we can point to the Scriptures, the Sacraments, the charity of others, and the Apostolic teaching as a reminder that God is **STILL** with us. For us today, Advent is a call to preparation, to reconsider the great gift we’ve been given. The Father fulfilled His promise to send the Messiah, and then the Holy Spirit to His pilgrim Church. The Son of God will return as He promised.

Lord God, hold us close to you and give us hope, show us your ways and increase our faith, comfort us with Your presence and give us Your Joy, and grant us peace in our day as we wait for the coming of Our Lord and Savior. Amen

Quotes from the Catechism, <https://www.usccb.org/sites/default/files/flipbooks/catechism/>
Advent Sunday readings, <https://www.usccb.org/prayer-worship/liturgical-year/advent/>