

*KILDARE & LEIGHLIN  
SCRIPTURE SHARING*



*Advent 2021*

## CONTENTS

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Pg. 2  | Method and Guidelines for Facilitators |
| Pg. 3  | First Sunday of Advent                 |
| Pg. 5  | Second Sunday of Advent                |
| Pg. 7  | Third Sunday of Advent                 |
| Pg. 9  | Fourth Sunday of Advent                |
| Pg. 11 | Ceremony of Hope                       |

## **METHOD**

Thanks to all those who decide to use our Advent Booklets this year

We know that there are many well-established groups both in Kildare and Leighlin and outside who may wish to use these booklets... thanks for your faithfulness!!

We hope that this booklet may also be of use to people who wish to reflect on the Advent readings, but for different reasons cannot join a group.

Here are some guidelines to help those who are reflecting in groups:

- Wherever you gather, some focus might be very useful, such as a lighted candle or an icon. This can be very simple, but serves to remind people that we gather in the presence of the God who wants to speak to us through his Word.
- Before you begin, it might be an idea to use a small Taize chant or a well-known hymn, just to set the atmosphere.
- It would be good to pray the opening prayer together as a group.
- Take time at the reading of the Gospel passage. This is the most important part of the gathering. Allow for some minutes of silence afterwards.
- Arrange with someone beforehand to read the Reflection. Again, after the reflection, please allow for some time of silence. This can be followed by a time of sharing, but no-one should be put under pressure to say anything!

- The prayers given can be supplemented with prayers for the parish or community, or other needs as present themselves.
- The “Final Thought” is meant to give a small idea for people to take away with them. It can be read out loud, or people can read it in their own time.

Thank you once again for your faithfulness to this reflection of the Gospels. We hope it brings you the joy and peace that comes to those who “hear God’s Word and keep it”!

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

We wish to thank Srs. Ann Walsh, Order of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Cecelia Molloy, Order of the Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Joan Pierse, Order of the Loreto Sisters and Kate Cuskelly, Order of the Holy Family of Bordeaux, for generously giving their time to contribute to our Advent Scripture booklet with such wonderful reflections and prayers. May these reflections and prayers inspire us all



## 1<sup>ST</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### PRAYER

Lord, bless us as we begin the Advent journey of waiting and watching. We pray for a listening heart so we can hear your word in Scripture and an attentive ear to recognise your voice in our daily lives. May we see your call in our work and your face in our companions

**With Mary we pray**

Hail Mary ...

### READING

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel a number of times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

**First Reading: Jeremiah 33:14-16**

**Second Reading: 1Thess. 3:12-4:2**

### Read the Text

**A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 21:25-28, 34-36**

Jesus said to his disciples: *'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.'*

*'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to*

*survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'*

### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### REFLECTION

O Come, O come Emmanuel. These words echo in our ears and in our heart and become our Advent prayer. Emmanuel 'God with us.'

Advent is the beginning of the new Church year. It is a time of waiting in joyful hope for the coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ. We remember the story of Jesus' birth and that memory of love becomes the ground of our hope. The season has a twofold focus: the birth of Jesus at Christmas and the second coming of Christ at the end of time which is the completion of our hope. The Gospel of this first Sunday is pointing towards the coming of Christ at the end of time. It helps us to be mindful of our ultimate destiny and shows us how to live today – with a hopeful faith. As I ponder the story of God's saving love how can I best share and receive the gift of hope in my daily life?

*'God's ways are faithfulness and love'.*

Ps. 24

Jesus describes a very turbulent time of war and natural disasters and great suffering for many especially the poor. Into this seemingly chaotic scene Jesus brings a message of hope, justice and love. *'They will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and glory.'*

The cloud signifies the glory of God and a sign of hope for the true disciples, because it announces the moment of liberation. *'I am going to fulfil the promise.'* Jer. 33:14 This message of hope is very relevant for our world today as it struggles with the effects of climate change, war, famine and the suffering inflicted by greed, injustice and the Corona Pandemic. What difference

does my hope in Jesus bring to these difficult times and to my own experiences of grief and disappointment?

The Gospel calls us to be mindful of the reality of our own lives and of our society and environment. *‘Watch yourselves or your hearts will be coarsened.’* With all the cares of life I can become insensitive to others and their struggle. Can I take a little time each day to mindfully reflect and be aware of the presence of God? Do I recognise God in the events of my day? What are the reminders of His hidden presence?

Advent is an invitation to *‘stay awake, praying at all times.’*

*‘I have loved you with an everlasting love.’* Jer. 31:3.

When we keep our gaze fixed on Jesus, we remember God’s great love. This is our reason for hope.

***Allow for a period of five to ten minutes’ silence***

#### **PRAYER**

**Response: Come Lord Jesus.**

Lord, you come to bring us hope and courage; help us to be a support to those who feel a stranger in our midst or feel rejected and hopeless in their present struggles.

**Come Lord Jesus.**

Lord, you come to show God’s great love and care for us and our world; help us to show our care for one another, our environment and all our endangered species.

**Come Lord Jesus.**

Lord, you come to show the generosity of God; may we share our gifts freely and willingly in a way that gives dignity to those who receive them.

**Come Lord Jesus.**

Lord, come and be with your Church as we set out on the Synodal Pathway. May the Holy Spirit be our guide and inspiration.

May we journey together with openness and respect for all.

**Come Lord Jesus.**

Glory be to the Father....

#### **FINAL THOUGHT**

*‘It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open the door to hope.’*

Pope Benedict XVI





## 2<sup>ND</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### PRAYER

Our readings today focus us on the presence of God in our world, showing splendour in every aspect of Creation, and the love of Christ for us through all our human interactions and care for each other. We pray that we may listen with the ear of our heart today.

**With Mary we pray**

Hail Mary ...

### READING

People can take it in turns to read the Gospel, or else if someone is praying on his/her own, then s/he can read the Gospel a number of times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

**First Reading: Baruch 5:1-9**

**Second Reading: Philippians 1:3-6, 8-11**

### Read the Text

**A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 3:1-6**

In the fifteenth year of Tiberius Caesar's reign, when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judaea, Herod tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of the lands of Ituraea and Trachonitis, Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the pontificate of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John, son of Zechariah, in the wilderness. He went through the whole Jordan district proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the sayings of the prophet Isaiah:

*A voice cries in the wilderness;  
Prepare a way for the Lord,  
make his paths straight.*

*Every valley will be filled in,  
every mountain and hill be laid  
low,  
winding ways will be straightened  
and rough roads made smooth.  
And all mankind shall see the  
salvation of God.*

### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### REFLECTION

Today's readings call for a '*baptism of repentance*' in the words of John, the Baptist, '*And the forests and every fragrant tree will provide shade at the command of God*'. There is mention of '*peace through integrity*' and '*our bondage as streams in dry land*'. So how are we doing?

Our climate is changing, and creation cries out for our attention. People are facing floods, fires and much destruction. Mountains, forests and seas bear the footprint of our greed. Our children and youth speak of that. '*A voice cries in the wilderness*'.

Are we listening with the ear of our heart? Are we conscious of the need for compassion and change of heart? Can we open the door to Christ this Advent?

May we walk humbly on earth.  
May we take care of the poor.  
Help us to know and to trust in you.  
You hold the key to the door.

Open our minds to knowing you.  
Open our hearts to your care.  
Knowing your presence in everything.  
Finding you everywhere.

Open our eyes to seeing you.  
Beauty and splendour on earth.  
Active and present in all our lives.  
Bringing Christ's mission to birth.

May we answer the call of John, the Baptist, the call of the earth, and the coming of Christ, to open the door of our heart this Advent.

*Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence*

**PRAYER**

As we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ, we present our prayers.

**Response: Lord, hear our Prayer**

For Pope Francis, who has given us Laudato Sí to direct us in our care of the earth. May he continue to find strength and courage in his preaching and teaching.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

For our political and Church leaders across the globe that they may be directed and supported in their search for justice and peace.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

For nurses and doctors, carers and life givers, and for parents and guardians who go the extra mile in their daily work and care. May God's spirit be upon them and guide them in safety.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

For all who feel under pressure and may be inclined to lose hope, that they may be renewed in confidence and courage during these days. May they find strength in the example of St Joseph, who put his trust in God and was enabled to overcome many difficulties.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

For our family members and friends who have departed this life and for all who have died from Covid 19, that they may find peace and fulfilment in the presence of their Lord and Maker

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

**FINAL THOUGHT**

May the call of John, the Baptist, today help us to focus on what direction we may take in our journey towards Christ. May we answer the call of the earth and the call of our youth. May we find peace and contentment on life's voyage. As we prepare once again for the coming of Christ into our lives, may he enable us to hear the message so that '*winding ways may be straightened and rough roads made smooth*'. May we find much peace and bring peace to all.





### 3<sup>RD</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

#### PRAYER

As we journey through Advent, let us welcome some quiet time to reflect on the Gospel for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday. Following from last Sunday John the Baptist is the key figure. Today's Preface reminds us: we pray, 'so that (at his coming) he may find us watchful in prayer and exultant in his praise'.

#### With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

#### READING

Again, ask a few people to read the Gospel text. Keep it slow! Take your time; remember that God wants to speak to you in these words.

Allow for a few minutes of silence.

**First Reading: Zephaniah 3:14-18**

**Second Reading: Philippians 4:4-7**

#### Read the Text

#### A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 3:10-18

When all the people asked John, 'What must we do?' he answered, 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none, and the one with something to eat must do the same.' There were tax collectors too who came for baptism, and these said to him, 'Master what must we do?' He said to them, 'Exact no more than your rate.' Some soldiers asked him in their turn, 'What about us? What must we do?' He said to them, 'No intimidation! No extortion! Be content with your pay!'

A feeling of expectancy had grown among the people, who were beginning to think that John might be the Christ, so John declared before them all, 'I baptise you

with water, but someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand to clear his threshing-floor and to gather the wheat into his barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' As well as this, there were many other things he said to exhort the people and to announce the Good News to them.

#### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

#### REFLECTION

His hearers ask John what they must do in response to his call and in consequence of the baptism he is administering. John spells out in concrete terms what repentance requires, in the various circumstances in which people find themselves. His advice stresses the relational and one's obligations towards others.

Justice is a priority. 'If anyone has two tunics he must share with the man who has none....' To the tax collectors he encourages: 'Exact no more than your rate...' To the soldiers, he said: 'No intimidation! No extortion! ..'

Focusing on reality John knew he needed to clarify that his role was preparatory, (fore runner) for the Messiah. 'Someone is coming, someone who is more powerful than I am and I am not fit to undo the strap of his sandals..' How humble of John. The image he uses of being unworthy 'to undo the strap of Christ's sandals' is very powerful. This image is faith filled and invites us to be aware whose birth we are preparing to celebrate.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent is known as Gaudete Sunday (Rejoicing Sunday.) The theme of joy comes through in the Old Testament reading from Zephaniah: 'Rejoice, exult with all your heart..' Also

St. Paul from Philippians exhorts us: *'I want you to be happy in the Lord; I repeat what I want is your happiness'..... 'The Lord is very near'*, there is only one more Sunday before we celebrate the joy of Christmas Day.

***Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence***

**PRAYER**

**Response: Lord, hear our Prayer**

We pray for Pope Francis that he may have good health, wisdom and courage to continue being a beacon for the world today.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

We pray for all those who have died as refugees and migrants on their dangerous route to find a better future.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

Lord, our Covid stricken world needs your strength and healing, enable us to live honestly by following guidelines for our safety.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

Lord, lead us to be generous this Advent season and particularly to support the Vincent de Paul Christmas appeal or any other deserving charity.

**Lord, hear our Prayer**

**FINAL THOUGHT**

God our Father help us to seek joy and happiness not in personal contentment nor in things but in people and in you, in human kindness and in sharing, and in doing all things well. Make our every day new and worth living through the presence among us of Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen





## 4<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY OF ADVENT

### PRAYER

Loving God, we come together to reflect and to pray. We ask you to open our minds and hearts to listen to you as you speak to us through Scripture, through each other, through the reality of our everyday lives and through all of creation.

Give us ears to hear, eyes to see and hearts to respond to the promptings of your Holy Spirit.

### With Mary we pray

Hail Mary ...

### READING

Once again, ask a number of people to read the Gospel Passage. Remember that God wants to speak to you through these words, so spend a little time in silence to grasp these words and hold them.

**First Reading: Micah 5:1-4**

**Second Reading: Hebrews 10:5-10**

### Read the Text

#### A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Luke 1:39-44

Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah's house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, *'Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the*

*promise made her by the Lord would be fulfilled.'*

### WORDS/PHRASES

Suggest that each person says a word or a phrase which stayed with them from the reading (*with no comment from anyone else*)

### REFLECTION

The story of the Visitation is one that is familiar to many of us. If saying the family Rosary was part of your growing up, then this second Joyful Mystery is somewhere in your memory. It was indeed through the Rosary that many of us were first introduced to the Gospel stories. There is something very homely and ordinary about the visit of Mary to her cousin Elizabeth but there are layers of deeper meaning in this story too. There are calls and challenges for us today when we allow this word of God to touch our hearts.

Contemplate these two women for a moment. Both received a special message from God. No doubt neither felt equal to what was being asked of them. Mary was a young unmarried girl. Elizabeth was past the age of childbearing. Yet these two women were called to be messengers, the bearers of God's intimate communication with all of humankind. Mary and Elizabeth, through their deep trust in our loving God and their openness to the power of the Spirit, bear living witness to the words of Jesus *'for God everything is possible'*. Mt.19:26.

Pope Francis, in a homily in Rome on the Feast of the Annunciation, 2016, pointed to Mary's encounter with Elizabeth as a lesson in service and joy in the Christian life. Mary sets out without hesitation to be with her cousin at this very important moment in both their lives. This is the first of Mary's journeys as related in the scriptures, it will be the first of many. She will journey from Galilee to Bethlehem, she will go down to Egypt, she will go every year for the Passover to Jerusalem and ultimately, she will follow Jesus to

Calvary. These journeys all have one thing in common; they were never easy. Each different road required much courage and self-sacrifice. Mary knows what it is like to be fearful, to be weary and to wonder and worry about what lies ahead. Mary is indeed our mother who reaches out her hand to hold us and guide us in the most perilous twists and turns in our own life's journey.

The meeting of Mary and Elizabeth speaks of new life and joy and promises of future blessings. In this encounter, the younger and older woman meet and embrace in a life enhancing way, each bringing out the best in the other. Mary and Elizabeth recognized the power of God at work in each of them. They look to each other for affirmation and support in saying their 'YES'. Mary's response to Elizabeth's greeting gives expression to the nature of the God in whom they both trust. A God of the poor, one who raises up the lowly and fills the hungry with good things. This is a God who causes them to celebrate with joy and gratitude. *'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my savior'.* ***Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence***

#### **PRAYER**

**Response: O Lord, give us your love.**

The Visitation story highlights the importance of hospitality and being other-centered. We pray that we will be people who are generous in reaching out in love and care especially to those who need a comforting word or gesture of kindness.

**O Lord, give us your love**

The encounter between Mary and Elizabeth speaks of joy and gratitude. May we be people who count our blessings and are life givers in our world.

**O Lord, give us your love**

The Magnificat reminds us that God raises up the lowly. We pray that we will be open to the presence of God in all of creation

remembering that all bear the image and likeness of the creator.

**O Lord, give us your love**

We pray that the calls and challenges of the Visitation story will inspire us to listen and respond to the invitation of Deuteronomy to 'Choose Life' and the words of the prophet Micah reminding us of what a life centered on God involves, *'This is what Yahweh asks of you: only this, to act justly, to love tenderly and to walk humbly with your God'.*

**O Lord, give us your love**

#### **FINAL THOUGHT**

It was Mary, the mother of Jesus, who gave flesh to the Eternal Word.

It was Mary whose co-operation with God enabled Jesus to live among us.

It was Mary filled with God's grace who allowed us to glimpse God's glory in Jesus Christ.

Mary carried Jesus in her womb and gave birth to the child who was her son and the Son of God.

Mary nurtured Jesus, giving him the human graces that nurturing gives.

Mary was mother, nurturer, handmaid of the Lord.

We are called to be like her.

Mary is strength and gentleness.

As she is, so we can be.



## **CEREMONY OF HOPE**

### ***From Darkness into Light***

Wrapped in December darkness we welcome the birth of the Son of God, the light of lights, the Prince of Peace.

#### **SUGGESTED SETTING**

Group in a circle. Cloth in the centre with an unlit large candle, and a small tea light for each member of the group.

#### **LEADER**

Let us take a few moments to be aware of our breathing, to be quiet and focus on the unlit large candle. (*Background music if possible*)

December 21<sup>st</sup> has the longest hours of darkness for those of us in the Northern Hemisphere. If you were in Newgrange, Co. Meath on that morning at 9am you would experience the rising sun and the sunlight peeping through the passage grave.

In pre-Christian times our ancestors were fearful that darkness and death would rule over the earth, so they circled sacred fires built on hilltops and in holy places to petition the gods and the goddesses to bring back the sun.

The Christian feast, December 25<sup>th</sup>, Christmas day, celebrates the word made flesh who came as a light in the darkness. Jesus the Light of our world has overcome darkness. This darkness comes in many forms and patterns. It can be a brief visitor or a long-term resident. The darkness holds a variety of emotions, some of which may not feel good (*Background music*) Let us reflect on the dark times in our lives during the past year (*pause*). (*The large, unlit candle is passed around as each person takes time to reflect on the darkness in their own lives. Each person is then invited to share their dark times with one other person, or with the group if they so wish*)

#### **VOICE 1**

If we listen carefully in the darkness we will hear a tiny voice whisper.

#### **VOICE 2**

I will go before you and level the mountains. I will give you treasures out of the darkness and riches that have been hidden away.

#### **VOICE 3**

In the dark days I do not wait until light dawns for I know not when it shall come. I go instead stumbling into the darkness, searching for a road, straining to see a way – darkness, it is a place of growth.

Tonight we are celebrating and marking the emergence of light out of darkness, of hope out of despair. (*one person is invited by the leader to light the large candle. All present stretch out their hand towards the candle as the blessing is read*)

#### **BLESSING**

As we light this candle we ask that God who is the fullness of light will protect each of us, our families and friends from that which we fear most.

#### **Scripture Reading: Isaiah 9:1**

The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light. On those who live in a land of deep shadow a light has shone

*(Silent Reflection)*

#### **PRAYER**

May we all be encircled by the warmth of the light and love of God and the flame of our friendship with one another.

May we who are gathered here be protected from all harm and disease, all evil and wickedness, all fear and darkness. Let us celebrate the light breaking through the darkness with song.

*'The Light of Christ has come into the World' or 'City of God' or any suitable hymn.*

**LEADER**

*Invites each one to light a tea light from  
the large candle*

We focus on each person as s/he light a candle, and we remember his/her family and friends. We are aware also of our connectedness with each other, with the world and the whole of creation.

*Invites each one to share their hopes for  
this Christmas and for 2015*

**PRAYER**

May we find hope in the lights we have kindled, hope in one another and in all who form the web work of peace and justice that spans the world. May we call forth from one another the light and the love that is hidden in every heart.

**HYMN**

The Lord is my Light  
My Light and Salvation  
In Him I trust  
In Him I trust

*Or any hymn of choice.*

**FINAL BLESSING**

Light of God to give us hope  
Power of God to protect us  
Light of God to give us joy  
Peace of God to calm us  
Light of God to give us faith  
Grace of God to save us,  
this night and ever more.  
Amen



Copyright: Kildare & Leighlin Diocese