

Advent at the Paulist Center



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ADVENT DEVOTIONAL

Advent with St. Óscar Romero
by Cameron Bellm

Come and rest in the beauty of St. Óscar Romero's Advent and Christmas homilies, based on the same readings we will hear this year, 2023. Each homily is broken up into five sections, with meditative prayer suggestions offered for each.

To download the free devotional visit:
www.paulistcenter.org/advent2023

MARANATHA! COME, LORD JESUS

"Advent" from the Latin, means "coming." But the Advent we keep is not simply about anticipating the celebration of Christmas. As author and teacher Joan Chittister, OSB, suggests, Advent asks us to be attentive to three different comings of Christ: "The first is the remembrance of the birth of Jesus in Nazareth in the flesh, recalling God's coming among us as one of us." The liturgies of Advent invite us to recall God's enormous desire for us: God so longs to draw near to us that God takes on our human condition in the person of Jesus. Then there is a second coming of God, now, in the "words of Scripture, in the Eucharist, in the community itself. This coming makes Jesus present in our own lives, eternally enlivening, eternally with us."¹ Our lives are an Advent – we look for the coming of Christ into our world today for Christ is born continually in our prayer, our relationships, our experience, our thoughts, the events of our world.

The final coming is rooted in our Christian belief that the Son will return in glory. "The reign of God for which we strive with every breath will come in all its fullness. This is the fullness for which we long. Thus, all three of these comings – past, present, and future – all live together in one long sigh of the soul."² These three comings of Christ run through our Advent liturgies like a woven thread.

As we seek to "prepare the way of the Lord," we need, as Joan Chittister reminds us, to "do more than simply go through the Advent calendar. We must develop in us an Advent heart."³

In all of the busyness and flurry that mark this time of year, we need to make time to become more deeply aware of our longing for God and our attentiveness to the ways in which Christ is continually born in our lives. We are helped, here, by the depth and richness of the rituals, rhythms, symbols, and stories that our liturgy provides to help us develop our Advent heart. In doing so, we come to realize more fully each year how great our blessings are, how beautiful is a life lived in concert with Jesus

who came to show us the way. We learn the joy of anticipation, the joy of delighting in and cultivating a sense of the presence of God all around us, the joy of looking toward the final coming of Christ, the joy of living in the surety of even more life and possibilities in the future. Trusting that nothing is impossible with God.⁴

Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus, Come!

COMMUNITY ADVENT PRAYER

O Christ, who came to share our humanity and draw us to yourself:
as we prepare to celebrate the feast of your birth, increase our longing for your coming into our world.
MARANATHA! COME, LORD JESUS!

O Christ, who came to share our human condition in your taking flesh: help us to be attentive to the ways in which you continually come into our lives, in our prayer, in the Scriptures, in our gathering at your table.
Give us the grace to be awake to the many ways you come to us each day.
MARANATHA! COME, LORD JESUS!

O Christ, who is the Prince of Peace, come to draw all peoples to Yourself:
Come, inspire us to put aside all enmity and division, and to work for peace in our communities and in our world.
MARANATHA! COME, LORD, JESUS!

O Christ, who is the Consolation of God: move us in these Advent days to bring your love to all who live in fear, danger, hunger, and poverty. Inspire us to extend your love into our broken world.
MARANATHA! COME, LORD JESUS!

O, Christ who are both our journey and our journey's end: As we yearn for your final coming in glory, fill us with hope and joy in your presence among us. Assured in the knowledge that you always surround us with your infinite love, help us wait for you in Advent joy.
MARANATHA! COME, LORD JESUS!

1. Joan Chittister, OSB, "The Liturgical Year: The Spiraling Adventure of the Spiritual Life," (Thomas Nelson, Inc. Nashville, TN), 64-65.

2. Ibid.

3. Chittister, *The Liturgical Year*, 68.

4. Ibid.

Advent • Christmas Calendar

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 2 - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 3 - 10:00 a.m. (*Live stream*)

Sunday, December 3 - 6:00 p.m.

SPIRITUALITY OF ADVENT

Thomas Ryan, CSP

Saturday, December 2 - 4-4:45 p.m. (3rd fl.)

LGBTQ+ Online Advent Prayer Service

Tuesday, December 5 - 7-7:30 p.m. (on Zoom)

SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION

Friday, December 8

MASS SCHEDULE

7:55 a.m.; 12:05 p.m. (*with music*)

7:00 p.m. (*with music - live streamed*)

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 9 - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 10 - 10:00 a.m. (*Live stream*)

Sunday, December 10 - 6:00 p.m.

LOVE INCARNATE, LOVE DIVINE

Advent Christmas Concert

Saturday, December 9 - 8:00 p.m. (*Live stream*)

Sunday, December 10 - 2:00 p.m.

(*with Children's Pageant - Live stream*)

LGBTQ+ Online Advent Prayer Service

Tuesday, December 12 - 7-7:30 p.m. (on Zoom)

ADVENT SERVICE OF RECONCILIATION AND REFLECTION

Wednesday, December 13 - 7:00 p.m. (*Live stream*)

(*Opportunities for individual confession*)

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 16 - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 17 - 10:00 a.m. (*Live stream*)

Sunday, December 17 - 6:00 p.m.

LGBTQ+ Online Advent Prayer Service

Tuesday, December 19 - 7-7:30 p.m. (on Zoom)

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

MASS SCHEDULE

Saturday, December 23 - 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, December 24 - 10:00 a.m. (*Live stream*)

CHRISTMAS EVE

MASS SCHEDULE

Sunday, December 24 - 5:00 p.m. (*Live stream*)

Sunday, December 24 - 8:00 p.m.

CHRISTMAS DAY

MASS SCHEDULE

Monday, December 25 - 10:00 a.m.

SUNDAY REFLECTIONS

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Awaken

Isaiah 64:1-9; Psalm 80:1-7, 17-19; 1 Corinthians 1:3-9; Mark 13:24-37

In Mark's gospel for the first Sunday, Jesus reveals signs that will signal the coming of the Messiah in all His power and glory, and he issues a warning: "And what I say to you, I say to all: Keep awake." Jesus is telling us that an Advent Heart is an AWAKE heart: awake to the yearnings within us for His coming, awake to the ways he comes daily, awake to the strengths we receive to be awake enough to recognize God's presence.

Even while the people in the first reading from Isaiah beg their God to overlook their past transgressions, to "tear open the heavens and come down," they acknowledge God has done "awesome deeds that they did not expect." Could it be that God has already come down to them many times and that they were just not AWAKE to God's presence?

Paul tells the Corinthians and us that "the testimony of Christ has been strengthened among [us], that "[we] are not lacking in any spiritual gift as we wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ." Surely we have the gifts we need, the infusion of the Spirit, to remain awake to God's coming into our lives every day, perhaps many times a day, as we yearn for and journey toward the Christ's final coming in glory.

What can we do this week to become more Awake, to strengthen the AWAKE muscles of our Advent Heart?

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Prepare

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

In Mark's gospel, John the Baptist describes himself as "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness..." and he asks his followers and us to 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight...' John is telling us that to receive the coming of Jesus, we must prepare. An Advent Heart is a Heart that is PREPARED.

Isaiah repeats John's cry: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God." He exhorts us to "lift up our voices with strength, to spread the good news " for "our God is here" ready to feed us, to carry us as a shepherd carries his sheep. As we strive to PREPARE our Advent Hearts, we clear out the detritus of our lives, alert, open and ready to be fed and carried in the arms of our God. We listen, for the psalmist says God speaks to hearts prepared and open to hear God's word.

Peter tells us "what sort of persons [we ought] to be...leading lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God..." with hearts prepared to live "in accordance with his promise, as "we wait for new heavens and a new earth" when God comes in final glory.

What can we do this week to become more Prepared, to strengthen the PREPARE muscles of our Advent Heart?



THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Care

Isaiah 61:1-4, 8-11; Psalm 126; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; John 1:6-8, 19-28

The very opening words of Isaiah's message in this week's reading proclaim: "The spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me and sent me to bring good news to the oppressed, to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners..." Clearly, an Advent Heart is a CARING heart, a heart ready to "comfort for all who mourn" and work for justice for the oppressed. As descendants of those to whom this message was first announced, we are indeed "a people whom the Lord has blessed." We are loved, the hairs of our heads are numbered, and so we "greatly rejoice in the Lord, [our] whole being exulting in our God." We cry out with the psalmist: "The Lord has done great things for us, and we rejoice." With Paul we "rejoice always, for our Advent Heart is also a joyful heart.

When the priests and Levites ask John the Baptist to identify himself, he confesses that he is not the Messiah, but that "among them stands one whom they do not know..." one whose sandal John is unworthy to undo. With our caring Advent hearts, can we recognize that One among us, the Christ in the oppressed, the brokenhearted, the poor, the prisoners?

What can we do this week to press our CARING hearts into service of those in need? How can we experience and share "great joy in the Lord," and allow our whole being to "exult in our God" who lives among us?

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT: Obedient

2 Samuel 7:1-11, 16; Psalm 89:1-4, 19-26; Romans 16:25-27; Luke 1:26-38

In today's readings, we hear of chosen ones. God chooses David from among all David's brothers, takes him "from the pasture" and "has been with him wherever David has gone." Gabriel tells Mary she is God's "favored one," specially chosen to bear God's Son and birth Him into the world. David leaves his sheep, Mary simply says, "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word." Both of these figures show us that an Advent Heart is an OBEDIENT Heart, a heart that says, "Yes!" to whatever God asks. How is it possible for us to obey when we are asked to do something difficult? How is it possible to put our plans aside when necessary to follow God's plan? The psalmist declares that God's love is steadfast and Paul says God is able to strengthen us, also God's chosen ones, chosen from the beginning even before we were conceived in our mother's womb. Like God did with David, our faithful God walks with us always, lives within us as within Mary. We are awake to God's voice and prepared to recognize God's presence within us and around us. We comfort and care for all God's people and our world. With Mary we exult with joy in God, our Savior who has done great things for us, who came into our world, continues to come within and among us each day, and walks with us as we look forward to Christ's final coming in glory.

May our Advent Hearts – our AWAKE, PREPARED, CARING, JOY-FILLED, OBEDIENT hearts - expand and grow in these final days of waiting for ever-new comings of our God.

*May the Son of God
Who is already formed in you,
Grow in you, So that for you
He will become immeasurable,
And that in you
He will become laughter,
Exultation, the fullness of joy
which no one can take from you.*

- Isaac of Stella

