



# 2024

## ADVENT REFLECTION



Catholic  
Archdiocese  
of Adelaide



# INTRODUCTION

Natural disasters, war, fear, and uncertainty. People on the margins, desperate to belong, to find their place and way in the world. Teenagers living in fear of rejection for not fitting into social norms. These could be the today's news headlines, but they are also images colouring the Sunday Gospel readings this Advent.

On Sunday, the 1st of December, we begin a new liturgical year (Year C), which means that this Advent, we hear the Gospel of Luke proclaimed.

Luke's Gospel is filled with stories of people on the margins, poignantly illustrated in his depiction of the arrival of the Messiah. The Son of God was not born into earthly royalty, rather to a teenager, not yet married, in a small, oppressed, and impoverished village. We are reminded that our God is a God of unconditional welcome, expansive inclusion, and radical mercy. While the world around us changes, falls to pieces, and aches with the pain of constant tragedy, our God chooses to be one with us, to suffer with us, and to lift up the hurting, excluded, and rejected among us. The challenge for us is to both take comfort in our loving God, and to imitate God's generosity toward others, especially those whom we find most challenging to include.

This year's reflections were written by members of the Pastoral Services Team in the area of Justice, Healing and Inclusion. Their work focuses on people on the margins of Church and society, with ecology and justice, migrant communities, and spaces of inclusion. Their experiences provide a unique insight into Luke's Gospel. May your Advent season be filled with hope, joy and anticipation for the gift of Christ Jesus.

# HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

**This resource may be used for personal or group reflection. If you are using it for personal reflection, we suggest using your own bible to read the scriptures. Find a quiet space and pray before you begin reading. Take time to reflect on what God might be saying to you this week. Each week includes the following:**

## **SUNDAYS**

- Scripture Passage
- Reflection
- Prayer

## **GROUP REFLECTION METHOD**

- Gather with a small group each week.
- Begin with a short prayer.
- Read the Sunday readings together.  
*Pause for quiet reflection.*
- Read the reflection together.  
*Pause for quiet reflection.*
- Listen and Share: Take turns sharing your reflections on the readings.  
*What is God asking of us today through our listening and sharing?*
- Prayers of intention – *what prayers are needed for members of the group or the wider community?*
- Pray the closing prayer together.





# 1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## INTRODUCTION

Advent invites us to reflect on Christ's coming as the expression of God's justice and compassion. During this time of waiting, we are called to consider how we, as a community, can create space for those who are often excluded, support those who are hurting, and work towards a more inclusive and just world. The scriptures remind us that God stands with those on the margins and those facing challenges, and that the hope of Advent is not just individual but collective. As we prepare for Christ's arrival, we are encouraged to embody the justice and healing that God's reign brings, ensuring that everyone is welcomed into the light of divine love. We light the first of our four Advent candles – the candle of Hope.

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

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 24(25):4-5, 8-9, 10,14

**Second Reading:** 1 Thessalonians 3:12 – 4:2

## GOSPEL READING

*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 in 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.'

## REFLECTION

In today's Gospel, Jesus speaks of cosmic signs and turmoil among nations, urging his followers to stay vigilant and not be weighed down by the anxieties of life. He describes distress among peoples, with signs in the heavens and the shaking of the earth as precursors to his return in glory. These words resonate deeply today, as we witness similar unrest and disorder across the world. Natural disasters caused by climate are reminders of the urgent need for justice and healing for both creation and humanity. During these crises, it is easy for people to feel overwhelmed by fear and uncertainty, but Jesus' words call us to hold onto hope and work toward the healing of our world.

The global conflicts we see today — whether in Gaza, Lebanon, Israel, Ukraine, South Sudan, Nigeria, Myanmar, or other war-torn regions — reflect the division and suffering that Jesus warns about. These conflicts highlight the fragility of peace, the need for justice, and the exclusion of vulnerable populations. Yet, Jesus calls us to remain vigilant and committed to prayer, trusting that God's reign will bring about healing, inclusion, and justice for all. In these moments of chaos, we are called to stand firm in faith, continue seeking God's guidance, and remain hopeful for the coming of Christ's kingdom, where true justice, peace, and reconciliation will be realised. Even in the darkest times, redemption and restoration are near.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

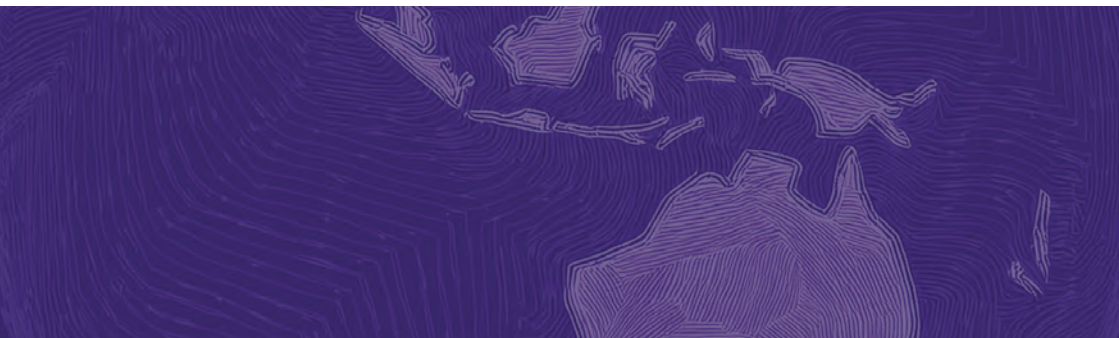
- As we prepare for Christ's coming during Advent, how does Jesus' call to stay alert and hopeful shape the way we respond to the uncertainties and challenges in our world today?
- In the season of Advent, a time of waiting and anticipation, how does Jesus' warning about not being weighed down by the anxieties of life invite me to refocus on what truly matters in my spiritual journey?
- Advent is a season of hope and expectation. How does the promise of redemption inspire me to deepen my faith and trust in God's presence, even amid the signs of turmoil and unrest in our world?

## PRAYER

Gracious God,

In a world shaken by fear and turmoil, we turn to You as the source of justice, healing, and inclusion. As we witness signs of change and uncertainty, give us the strength to stand firm and lift our heads high, trusting in Your promise of liberation. Guide our hearts to pursue justice for the oppressed, bring healing to the broken, and create a community where all are welcomed and valued. Keep us awake in prayer, that we may be instruments of Your peace.

Amen.





**2ND SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT**



## INTRODUCTION

As we light the second candle of the Advent wreath, the readings this Sunday offer a powerful moment of reflection as we prepare our hearts for the coming of Christ. The readings emphasise themes of hope, preparation and the call to repentance. A transformation that results in a change of heart. John the Baptist invites us to make space in our lives for Jesus, and to consider the things that block our path to him.

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

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 125 (126)

**Second Reading:** Phil 1:4-6, 8-11



Image: *Icon: John the Baptist (Byzantine icon, XIV century)*

## GOSPEL READING

*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.

## REFLECTION

Working as a lay hospital Chaplain there are many experiences where patients request a priest to come and give the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. More often it is patients that are extremely unwell or are close to dying. Often patients and families are moved to tears as the priest anoints the person with oil and says the prayers of the Sacrament.

The question I continue to ask myself is, what is it that makes the sick, the dying and their families reach for the Sacraments, particularly for some, after being away from the Church for many years? We could say that they have been wandering in the wilderness for many years, but all of them have been baptised and so Jesus continues to invite them into relationship with Him. Is it at these moments in life, in complete vulnerability, that they have the space to hear the invitation for healing and reconciliation in their relationship with God?

As faith filled people, we are invited to hear God's call for healing and reconciliation, by noticing the things that block our path to God. For me the blocks are social media, busyness and selfishness. By changing our hearts, the way to God is made clear, valleys are filled, mountains are levelled, winding roads are made straight, and obstacles are removed.

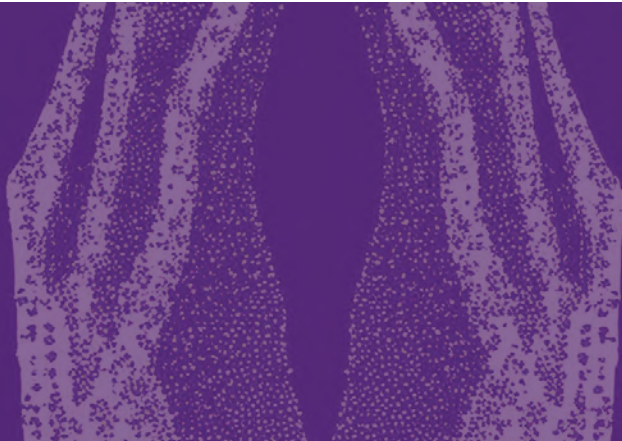
## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Are there habits, attitudes, or relationships that need healing or reconciliation?
- What are the 'deserts' in our times?
- How can I commit to simplifying my life to allow room for God to be more fully present in my life?

## PRAYER

I hope that every hollow valley of despair in myself and this world shall be filled in with God's love.  
I ask for my own faults to be smothered with Your kindness.  
I need my mountains of ego and elevations of fear to be brought low.  
I long for my rough edges  
to be smoothed in the broad hands of Your infinite love.  
Lord, may I learn to be ready for Your coming.  
Train me, as You trained John the Baptist,  
to search for You in silence.  
Help me to simplify my life  
and not be afraid to hand over the control of things to You.  
Help me to know when the right time is  
to break the silence in company when I need to witness to Your truth.  
Help me to recognize where the desert is in our times,  
in my own heart as much as in others.  
Help me to prepare the way to You.  
May Your Word grow strong in me and give me courage.  
Let it be as sharp as a two-edged sword when it needs to be,  
but also full of Your love and compassion.

*An Advent Prayer written by **Father Alfred Delp** - a German Jesuit priest killed at age 37 in a Nazi prison in 1945.*







# 3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

## INTRODUCTION

The third week of Advent centres on Joy. We light the pink candle, sometimes referred to as the shepherd's candle, one that brings Christ's light and joy into the world. This Sunday's readings ask us to prepare our hearts for Christ. How do we do this? The people ask John the Baptist poignant questions, which begs the question, why did they ask John? What characteristics did John display so that the people trusted his response? John lived authentically. His words matched his actions. He displayed humility and justice. This third week of Advent is a time to examine our lives and remove anything that would be an obstacle to receive the coming of Christ.

**First Reading:** Zephaniah 3:4-18

**Responsorial Psalm:** Isaiah 12:2-6

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

## GOSPEL READING

*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 the 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.

## REFLECTION

John the Baptist's words emphasize the importance of tangible actions in true repentance. John calls us to share the resources we have and act with honesty and fairness and to cultivate contentment. John's wisdom resonates with human experiences across the ages by providing practical advice on real issues with compassion, forgiveness, and humility.

Characterised by deep humility, John's prophetic insight leaves a lasting impact. His reflections challenge us to think about our own lives and beliefs and the limitations of this earthly life. He reminds us that to share the Good News, we must cloak ourselves in humility, open our hearts and use words and actions that build relationships and restore justice.

May John's message inspire us to embody the Reign of God in our daily lives.

## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do my actions in my family, neighbourhood and place of work reflect my Christian values?
- Is it time for me to take some time to clean out my life and my cupboards/wardrobes?
- Would someone that knows me call me humble?



## **PRAYER**

God of Joy,

You fill our hearts with the warmth of Your love and the joy of Your salvation. Help us to prepare our lives for Your arrival by sharing the message of peace and joy with all we meet. Guide us to be a light in the world, reflecting Your grace and truth.

In Jesus' name, we pray.

Amen.





**4TH SUNDAY  
OF ADVENT**

## INTRODUCTION

As we enter the fourth week of Advent, our hearts are filled with joyful anticipation for the celebration of Christ's birth. This feeling is reflected in the story of the Visitation, when Mary visited her pregnant cousin, Elizabeth. Upon hearing Mary's greeting, Elizabeth's child leapt in her womb. Mary's courageous acceptance of God's call and her unwavering faith are affirmed by the joyful reception offered by Elizabeth. This is especially meaningful at a time when the social norms would have cast shadows of doubt, exclusion and sacrilege over the young Mary.

As we light the final candle on the Advent wreath, may the shadows that plague our lives be dispelled and may we be ready to receive the gift of Christ in our homes and communities. It is a time to engage in prayer, reflection, and acts of kindness as we await the light of Christ to shine anew.

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

**Responsorial Psalm:** Psalm 79(80):2-3, 15-16, 18-19

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

## GOSPEL READING

*Luke 1:39-44*

Mary set out at that time 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.'



## REFLECTION

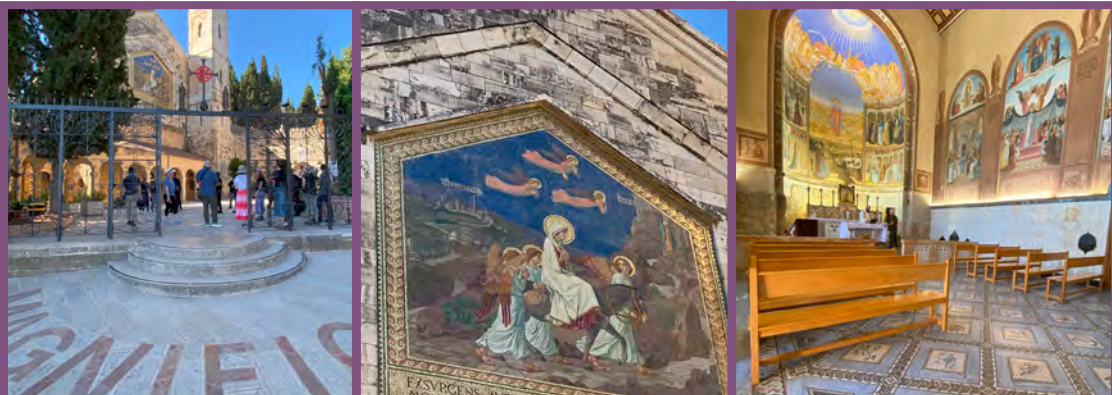
In this Gospel reading, we witness the joyful reunion between Mary and Elizabeth, two women brought together by miraculous pregnancies. The scene transported me back to a 2023 trip to Israel, where we celebrated Mass at the Church of the Visitation in Ein Karem, Jerusalem. This beautiful church is believed to be the site of Elizabeth's home.

The experience of journeying up the steep hillside to the church, gave me new insight into the probable terrain and landscape Mary endured as she travelled "in haste" to see Elizabeth. Inside the church, I was enthralled by the frescoes depicting the Visitation scene. I stood reflecting on the joy and significance of their meeting – echoed in Elizabeth's proclamation, "Of all women you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

Mary's visit to Elizabeth wasn't just a moment of celebration of faith and hope, but also of the power of support and healing during times of uncertainty and change. Their connection, grounded in mutual understanding and respect, speaks into our current realities as we face worldwide uncertainty, displacement and hardship.

Elizabeth's welcome of Mary demonstrates the same kind of inclusive love Jesus has for those marginalised in society. How often do we lend a hand in the troubles of others? How often do we include the excluded in our society? How often do we open our hearts to welcome the stranger in our midst?

Images by: *Sanjay Mohanaraj*



## REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How do I respond when I see God working in the lives of others? Do I celebrate with them, or do I feel envious or indifferent?
- How do I deal with God’s timing when it doesn’t align with my expectations? Am I patient and trusting in God’s plans, even when they seem delayed or unexpected?
- Mary and Elizabeth support each other in faith at a crucial moment. Who are the “Elizabeths” in my life — people who encourage my faith? How can I be an “Elizabeth” to someone else?

## PRAYER

God of Surprises,

As we prepare to celebrate the birth of Your Son, fill our hearts with joy and hope.

Just as Mary trusted in Your promise, help us to trust in Your plan for our lives.

May we open our hearts to welcome Jesus and share his love with those around us.

We ask this through Christ our Lord.

Amen.



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**JAMES LLOYD**

Pastoral Leader

*Justice, Healing and Inclusion*

**ANNETTE HEINEMANN**

Manager

*Hospital and Prison Chaplains*

**SANJAY MOHANARAJ**

Pastoral Support

*Justice, Healing and Inclusion*

**TRACEY TESSITORE**

Pastoral Support

*Justice, Healing and Inclusion  
(Multicultural Communities)*

**CLEMENT KUEK**

Pastoral Support

*Justice, Healing and Inclusion  
(African Communities)*

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**PASTORAL SERVICES TEAM**

*Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide*

39 Wakefield Street, Adelaide SA 5000

GPO Box 1364, Adelaide SA 5001

[pastoralservices@adelaide.catholic.org.au](mailto:pastoralservices@adelaide.catholic.org.au)