

ADVENT 2023



Catholic
Archdiocese
of Adelaide

INTRODUCTION

Peter Bierer

Assistant Director, *Pastoral Life and Mission*

My parents always made a big deal about Advent. We had an Advent wreath, celebrated feast days of the season (my favourite was St. Nicholas Day), and we used the time to prepare the house for Christmas. My mom, an artist, painted sleepy Bethlehem and angels poised to announce the Good News of Christ's birth. My dad, a composer, wrote a fully orchestrated Advent cantata! One year, dad built us a wooden Advent calendar with hinged doors, and mom filled the spaces each day with sweets, tiny gifts, and slips of paper with verses from the Advent Scriptures. Each night we sang Come, Lord Jesus, come and be born in our hearts, around the dinner table.

As my family prepared our hearts and home for the birth of Christ Jesus, we also engaged in acts of service and mission in our parish and school communities. We collected clothing and food for the local shelters and soup kitchens, we spent time gathering to pray and we joined the wider community in concerts and events that drew us closer together through the joy of the season. All of these things contributed to our formation and participation in the life, faith, and mission of Christ.

This year, the reflections on the Sunday readings (Year B) have been written through the lens of the new archdiocesan vision and mission statements. Through them, we invite you to commit to the waiting, watching, and hoping of Advent with prayerful hearts and a readiness to participate in the transformation of the whole world.

VISION

The Catholic Archdiocese of Adelaide strives to be a welcoming, Christ-centred community of believers serving others. As missionary disciples, we are committed to building up the Body of Christ by listening, discerning and growing in the Spirit, journeying together.

MISSION

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be:

- > Sharers of faith, hope and love
- > Builders of bridges
- > Healers of broken relationships
- > Agents of transformation in our world

HOW TO USE THIS RESOURCE

Each week includes the following:

SUNDAYS

- Scripture Passage
- Reflection
- Prayer

WEEKDAYS

- Scripture References
- Daily 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
IN ADVENT
YEAR B



INTRODUCTION

The Christian year begins with the season of Advent, and this way of beginning is itself significant. You might think the year would begin with the trumpets of Easter, or the softness of Christmas Eve, or the fires of Pentecost – but instead, we begin in the shadows of despair, war, sorrow, and hate. For it's precisely there that the God of grace will arrive, and accordingly, it's precisely there that the church traditionally lights candles of hope, peace, joy, and love against those shadows. This week, we light the candle of hope. Once we have entered the shadows (both intellectually and emotionally), we can proclaim the good news, the hope that rings out when all hope seems lost. All of us should be watchful and alert over the days and weeks ahead, cultivating a mindful attentiveness to signs of hope and wonder all around.

First Reading: Isaiah 63:16-17; 64:1,3-8

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 79:2-3, 15-16, 18-19

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:3-9

GOSPEL

Mark 13:33-37

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

ARCHDIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be ***sharers of faith, hope and love.***

REFLECTION

A familiar trope of romantic comedies is the hopeless lover who will do anything to be with their beloved: interrupt a wedding mid-ceremony, hop on an airplane just before take-off, or publicly declare their love. The action of the lover is both unexpected and expected. They appear unannounced at the most inconvenient moment, just to share their love in the hope that it will be reciprocated. The audience knows what's going to happen, and we can't get enough of it!

The readings for the first Sunday and Advent are a similar story. Israel cries out to God to 'tear open the heavens' (Isa. 64:1), 'let us see your face' (Ps. 79:4). Israel hoped in God's coming Messiah, but they didn't know when the Messiah would come. We know the end of the story, God (the lover) is so desperately in love with us (the beloved), that God will do anything just to be with us, even the unexpected: become one of us. This expected, unexpected love of God reminds us that we too must have hope, be ready, and 'stay awake!' (Matt: 13:37).

This love that the incarnated Christ brings to the beloved is not ours to keep, rather it is to be shared. As Paul told the Corinthians, 'by calling you [God] has joined you to his Son, Jesus Christ' (1 Cor. 1:9). Christ's mission is our mission. We too must fall deeply in love with our neighbour, the 'other' and indeed, all of Creation. We are to be sharers of faith, hope and love. Believe it or not, God is expecting the unexpected from you.

Peter Bierer

Assistant Director, *Pastoral Life and Mission*

PRAYER

O expected Unexpected Love,
Let our eyes be ready to see your face,
our arms to embrace you,
and our hearts to receive you.
Keep us ever watchful,
and ready to bear witness to you, Christ Jesus.
Amen.

GOSPEL READINGS & DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE 1ST WEEK IN ADVENT

Monday, 4 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 8:5-11*

Prayer: *Keep me ever watchful in the hope of your coming. Amen.*

Tuesday, 5 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 10:21-24*

Prayer: *Lord, we wait in joyful hope for your coming. Amen.*

Wednesday, 6 December (St Nicholas)

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 8:5-11*

Prayer: *Give me a generous and loving heart for those in need. Amen.*

Thursday, 7 December (St Ambrose)

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 7:21, 24-27*

Prayer: *Give me the courage to bear witness to love,
even in the most unexpected places. Amen.*

Friday, 8 December (Immaculate Conception)

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1:26-38*

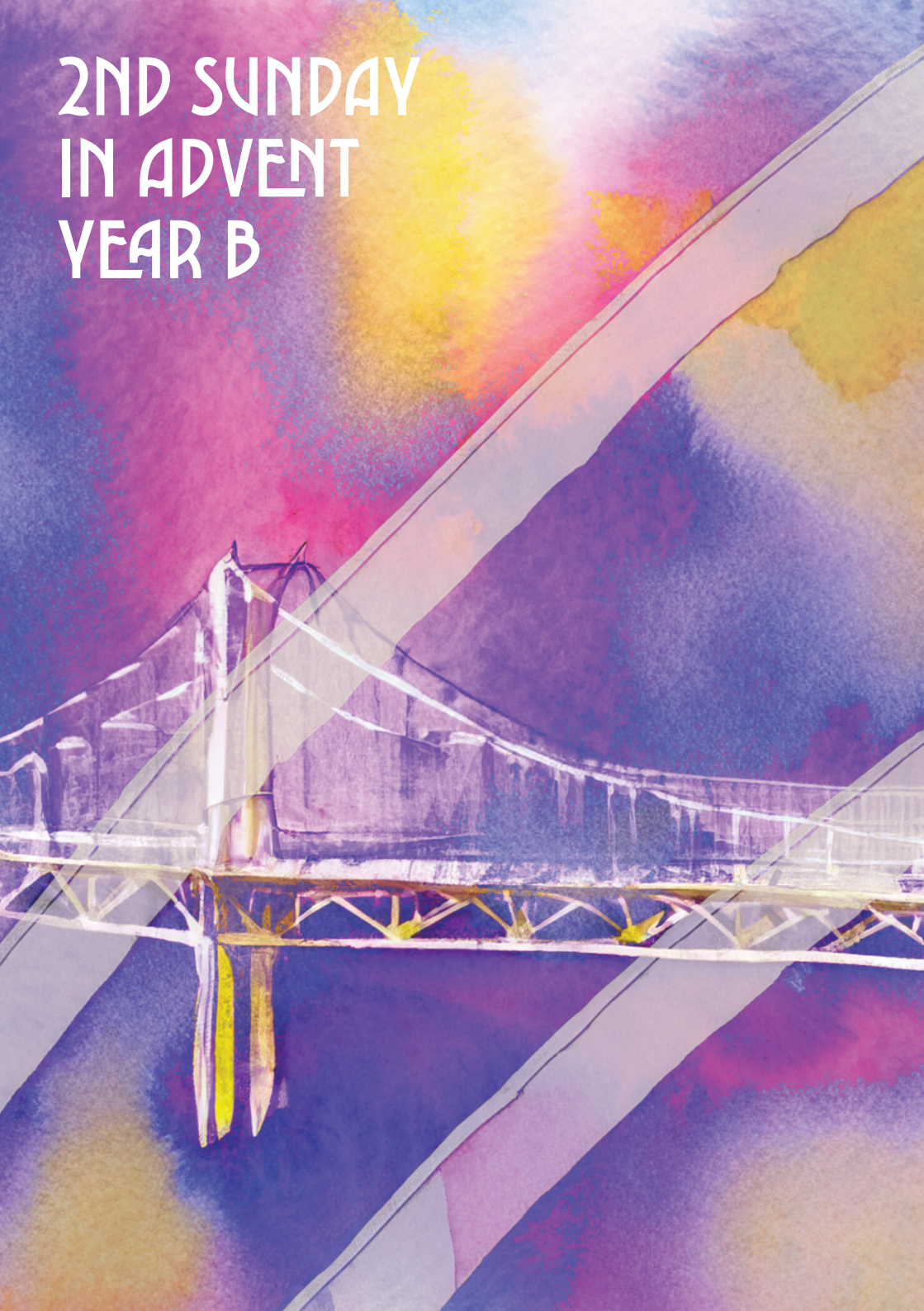
Prayer: *Help me to listen to your voice
and say yes to your plan for my life. Amen.*

Saturday, 9 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 9:35-10:1. 6-8*

Prayer: *Stir in me a longing for your presence in my life. Amen.*

2ND SUNDAY
IN ADVENT
YEAR B



INTRODUCTION

This year we'll be walking together through the Gospel of Mark. The journey began last week with a kind of "flash-forward" from Mark 13: on the verge of his descent to the cross, Jesus warns of difficult days ahead, assuring his disciples that all will be well and God will make everything right in the end. This week, we turn to Mark's opening verses, and from here on out we'll move forward more or less chronologically. It's a little bit like when a film starts with a scene from late in the story, a glimpse of the breathtaking drama to come – and then rewinds to begin at the beginning. Traditionally, the second week of Advent centres on lighting a candle of peace, a light to shine against the growing shadows of conflict and war. Accordingly, this is an excellent week to reflect on conflict and reconciliation, a world full of violence and the lion laying down with the lamb. In Jesus, God has created a new era of peace and restoration. He is coming!

First Reading: Isaiah 40:1-5, 9-11

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 84:9-14

Second Reading: 2 Peter 3:8-14

GOSPEL

Mark 1:1-8

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
he will prepare your way.

A voice cries in the wilderness:

Prepare a way for the Lord,
make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

ARCHDIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be ***builders of bridges***.

REFLECTION

John the Baptist cries “repent!” and God says, “Console my people, console them”. Repentance and atonement are not about punishment alone but are complemented by solace.

Today’s culture rejects the notion of sin, perhaps because the message is often incomplete, omitting the comfort that comes after the penalty. Shortly before writing this reflection, I was pulled over by a police officer for distracted driving (I was fully stopped, but I digress). Until now I’ve had a perfect driving record. After over thirty years behind the wheel, could I have become cavalier? One friend said that my fine has reminded him to stop multitasking while driving. Did my punishment just save multiple lives?

Someone else asked if I was going to contest the citation. Not at all! My perspective is a fragment of the big picture, the point of Peter’s letter. A day for the Lord could be an eternity for us. And we never know what is around the corner. This stuff of preparing the way, straightening paths, and lowering hills, is about removing obstacles and building bridges – bridges of reconciliation, of connection, of life. Repentance isn’t just about you but for all humanity to live life to the fullest.

Simone Brosig

Pastoral Leader, *Community, Life and Worship*

PRAYER

God of justice and faithfulness
You come with power
and subdue all things to yourself.
Amidst your might, let us see your kindness,
and grant us the patience to live holy and saintly lives.
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL READINGS & DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE 2ND WEEK IN ADVENT

Monday, 11 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 5: 17-26*

Prayer: *Lord, open my eyes to your signs and wonders. Amen.*

Tuesday, 12 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 18: 12-14*

Prayer: *O God, where I am lost, lead me back to you. Amen.*

Wednesday, 13 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 11: 28-30*

Prayer: *O Lord, I am weary; give me strength. Amen.*

Thursday, 14 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 11: 11-15*

Prayer: *Rain down justice upon us, O Lord. Amen.*

Friday, 15 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 11: 16-19*

Prayer: *Grant me the humility to hear your voice, O God,
and the courage to follow your commands. Amen.*

Saturday, 16 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 17: 10-13*

Prayer: *Implant in me a spirit of repentance, O Lord,
that all shall be saved. Amen.*

3RD SUNDAY
IN ADVENT
YEAR B



INTRODUCTION

As we tiptoe closer to the manger over the next two Sundays, we'll read passages from the Gospel of Luke in this Sunday's Psalm and the daily Gospel readings. Mark's Gospel is our focus this upcoming year, but that book begins with Jesus' baptism as an adult; for stories about Jesus' birth, we turn to Luke this week and next. Traditionally, the third week of Advent takes "Joy" as its central theme. It's sometimes called, "Gaudete Sunday" (gaudete means "rejoice" in Latin), and its candle in Advent wreaths is often rose-coloured. The overall idea here is that while Advent is a time of longing and waiting in the shadows for Christ to come, there's also room for taking some "anticipatory joy" in his coming – much like the vivid moments of joy narrated in the weekly Gospel readings from Luke. This may be the perfect week to name and explore the role of joy in our lives, including joy in the midst of sorrow. Singing "Joy to the World" this week may be a good place to start: it tangibly anticipates the joy of Christmas, and it's also true that Isaac Watts wrote it as an anticipatory celebration hymn.

First Reading: Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11

Responsorial Psalm: Luke 1:46-50, 53-54

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24

GOSPEL

John 1:6-8, 19-28

A man came, sent by God.

His name was John.

He came as a witness,

as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.

He was not the light,

only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:

Make a straight way for the Lord.’

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, ‘Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?’ John replied, ‘I baptise with water; but there stands among you unknown to you the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.’ This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

ARCHDIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be **healers of broken relationships**.

REFLECTION

Our pithy sayings “they don’t build them like they used to” and “there are other fish in the sea” point to today’s throw away culture. Do we replace people who have become broken as readily as we discard imperfect things?

Last year, I sought to repair a beloved heirloom. Not a few people called it a foolish endeavour. In the end, I was amazed by how skilfully the craftsman restored the piece. When I had to sell it a short time after, I was proud that someone else would enjoy its beauty.

God sends the prophet Isaiah to heal broken hearts. But first, he wraps Isaiah himself in a cloak that provides wholeness. The act of living is a courageous enterprise that incurs damages but with prayer, no one is irreparable. The letter to the Thessalonians ends with a supplication to be made “perfect and holy”. But is it worth it? Why not count our losses and try better in the next relationship? John the Baptist decries to make the way straight not for our own sake, but for the Lord. Yes. It’s worth healing people above all so they can be in relationship with others and with the Lord.

Simone Brosig

Pastoral Leader, *Community, Life and Worship*

PRAYER

God of mercy and compassion,
You leave no one behind.
Grant us the humility to be agents of reconciliation,
catalysts for healing,
We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

GOSPEL READINGS & DAILY PRAYERS FOR THE 3RD WEEK IN ADVENT

Monday, 18 December

Gospel Reading: *Matthew 1: 18-24*

Prayer: *Come, leader of ancient Israel; rescue us with your mighty power!
Amen.*

Tuesday, 19 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1: 5-25*

Prayer: *Come, Flower of Jesse's stem; save us without delay! Amen.*

Wednesday, 20 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1: 26-38*

Prayer: *Come, Key of David; free the prisoners of darkness! Amen.*

Thursday, 21 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1: 39-45*

Prayer: *Come, Radiant Dawn; shine on those lost in the darkness of death!
Amen.*

Friday, 22 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1: 46-56*

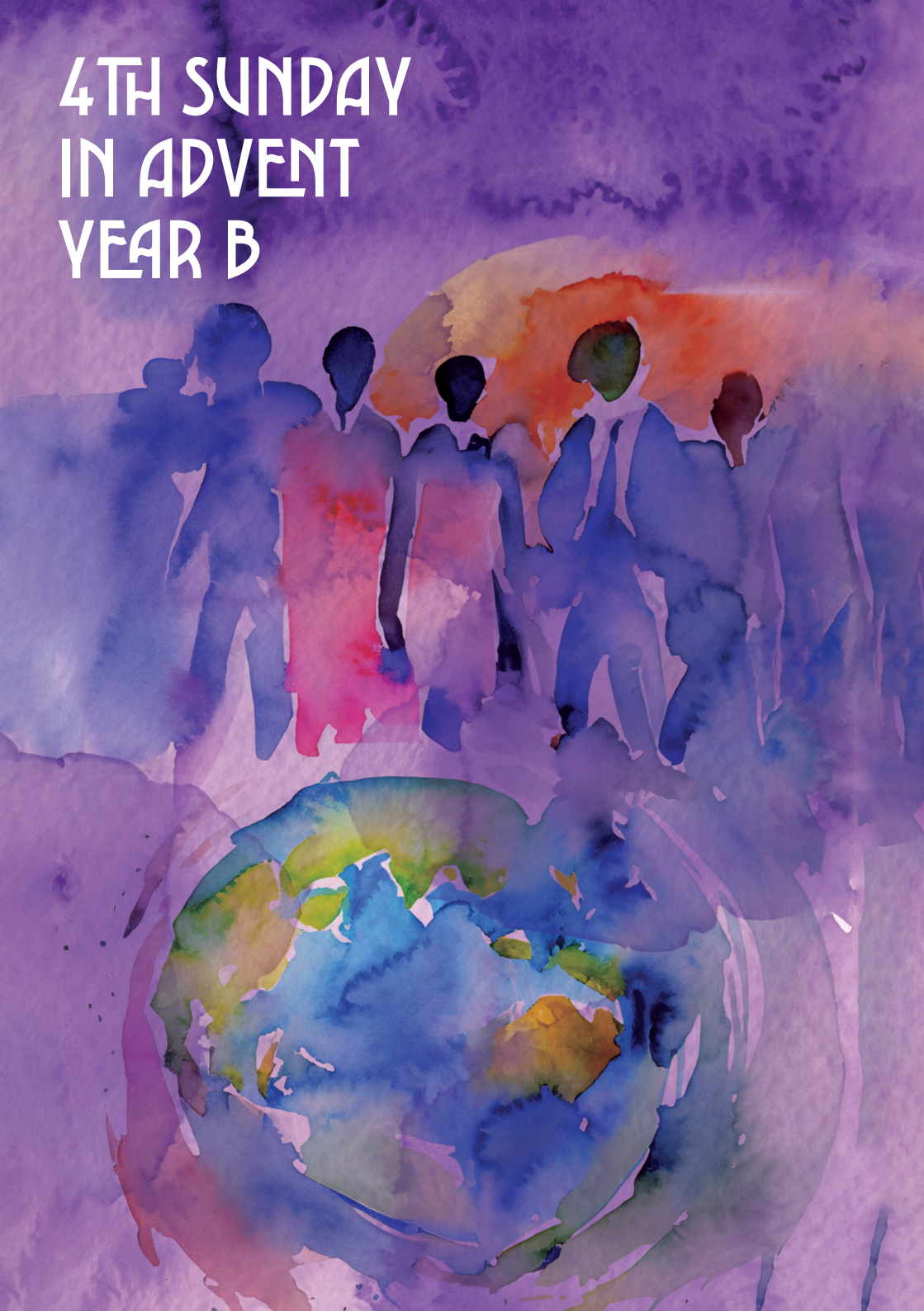
Prayer: *Come, kind of all nations; save all people, your own creation! Amen.*

Saturday, 23 December

Gospel Reading: *Luke 1: 57-66*

Prayer: *Come, Emmanuel; save us by your presence among us, Lord our God!
Amen.*

4TH SUNDAY
IN ADVENT
YEAR B



INTRODUCTION

If you're lighting a traditional Advent wreath, this week you'll light a candle of love against the shadows of hate. Reading Luke's account of the Annunciation in this candlelight casts it as a story of a loving God who cares deeply for humanity – and at the same time casts “love” as an unfolding force in history, taking shape through generations of ordinary, unexpected, and often vulnerable people. Through the lens of this week's Advent theme of “Love” is an invitation to reflect on what love really is, both God's and ours. The Christmas story is an epic, multigenerational love story, a story of God coming to be with us through prestigious prophets and “nowhere” towns; venerable priests and vulnerable young women; stars and shepherds, and scripture and song.

First Reading: 2 Samuel 7:1-5, 8-12, 14, 16

Responsorial Psalm: Ps 88:2-5, 27, 29

Second Reading: Romans 16:25-27

GOSPEL

Luke 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, ‘Rejoice, so highly favoured! The Lord is with you.’ She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the angel said to her, ‘Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God's favour. Listen! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.’

Mary said to the angel, ‘But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?’ ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you’ the angel answered ‘and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.’

‘I am the handmaid of the Lord,’ said Mary ‘let what you have said be done to me.’ And the angel left her.

ARCHDIOCESAN MISSION STATEMENT

As followers of Jesus, loved by God, nurtured and formed in community we are called to be ***agents of transformation in our world.***

REFLECTION

Today's readings speak to us of God's great love and the desire to be in close relationship with us, to provide for us, and to save us. In response to that love, David wishes to build a house for his God, the Psalmist commits to sharing the love of God through song, and Paul strives to bring God's love to all nations. The Gospel reminds us of the Angel Gabriel's remarkable pronouncement of the incarnation and Mary's humble response, "let what you have said be done to me". Her "yes" enabled the birth of our Saviour, which transformed humanity forever.

As you prepare to celebrate the birth of Christ, how might you respond to the love poured out by God in your life? What invitations can you accept for the good of others? Identify changes you could make, or habits you might develop to help God transform this world into the place of love it was intended to be. Even the smallest action on our part can have a ripple effect on our world, so as we think of resolutions for our coming new year, let one of them be saying "yes" to God. When we say yes to God, the seemingly impossible becomes possible.

Orla Wright

Pastoral Support, *Community, Life and Worship*

PRAYER

Loving God,
In you all things are possible.
Help us to transform this world through love,
so that all may know you and share in your glory. Amen.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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