

Scripture Sharing



ADVENT 2022

May the Peace of Christ dwell in our Hearts

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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 that 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 John McDermott, a retired Civil Servant and parishioner of Naas Parish, for generously giving his time to contribute to our Advent Scripture booklet with such wonderful reflections and prayers. May these reflections and prayers inspire us all.



1ST SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

'To you Lord I lift up my soul' (Psalm 24:1)

As I start on this Advent Journey, I desire to lift up my soul to you O Lord. I wish to renew once again my commitment to follow you, to be reborn and to awaken to your presence in my life.

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 several times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 2:1-5

Second Reading: Romans 13:11-14

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 24:37-44

Jesus said to his disciples: *'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left. 'So, stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand*

ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

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

'I rejoiced when I heard them say let us go to God's house.'

Jesus help me realize that you are dwelling in me. That my journey to God's house is an inward journey. Help me to take time this Advent to become more aware of what that means. Guide me to this inner space so that you can teach me your ways and I can learn to walk in your light 'The night is almost over it will be daylight soon.' Yes, Lord I live at times in the darkness even though I have the choice to live in the light. I always have a choice, but I don't always have the strength or the desire to choose the light. Lord at the times when I am most vulnerable help me to reach out to you and take your hand and trust you. I want to walk in your light.

'So, stay awake because you do not know the day when your master is coming.'

This Advent help me discover my true power source. What do I need to do to be ready? What do I need to do to be ready when Christ comes or will I even recognise Christ when he comes? This Advent help me to develop a daily practice that will leave me ready and able to recognise Christ in my life.

'They will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into sickles.' Lord what are the swords and spears that I carry? What are my weapons? How have I injured and hurt others with these weapons? Have I been cruel in my words, spoken or written? Have I exercised power over vulnerable others, as a parent, as a colleague, as a friend or as a neighbour? Have I held on to hurts real or imaginary? Help me to remould my weapons into implements of peace.

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

PRAYER

Response: O Lord give us your love

Help us Lord this Advent to let go of all
that stops us from awakening to your
presence in the beautiful world around us.
Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Just as the trees have shed their leaves in
order to allow new growth, help us to look
forward with hope and trust each day
knowing that you are always with us. Lord
hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord you are the prince of peace.
May we experience your peace in our
hearts so that wherever we go we may be
instruments and channels of your peace.
Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord help us be attentive to your voice as
you invite us to spend time daily with you
this Advent. Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

Isaiah 43: 18

‘See, I am doing a new deed even now it
comes to light. Can you not see it? Yes, I
am making a road in the wilderness, paths
in the wild.’





2ND SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

‘The Lord will make the glory of his voice heard in the joy of your heart’. (Is 30: 19)
Keep us faithful to our daily practice of spending time in your presence so that we may hear your voice as you invite us to follow you.

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 several times. This should be followed by a time of reflective silence.

First Reading: Isaiah 11:1-10

Second Reading: Romans 15:4-9

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 3:1-12

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: *‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.’* This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the wilderness:

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

This man John wore a garment made of camelhair with a leather belt around his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole of Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees

and Sadducees coming for baptism, he said to them, *‘Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, ‘We have Abraham for our Father,’ because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.’*

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 wolf lives with the lamb, the panther lies down with kid, calf and lamb feed together with a little boy to lead them. Help me to recognise the wolf and lamb in my life and the panther and kid. It is ok that these opposites exist in me. Help me to accept and embrace the totality of my being. In acceptance of myself – the good and the bad – help me to see those around me in their totality also. ‘It can only be to God’s glory then for you to treat each other in the same friendly way as Christ treated you’.

‘But if you are repentant produce the appropriate fruit.’ What are my fruits – pride, covetousness, lust, anger, envy, jealousy, sloth – or are my fruits – love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness self-control? Lord while I have both sets of fruit in my tree of life, I bring then all to you and during this Advent guide me to repentance and acceptance of myself and

fill me with your Holy Spirit and with fire.
Spirit of the living God, fall afresh on me,
melt me, mold me, fill me, use me, Spirit
of the living God fall afresh on me.

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

PRAYER

Response: O Lord give us your love

Lord as we continue our Advent journey,
keep us faithful to our daily practice of
spending time with you so that we may
recognise you in our daily lives. Lord hear
us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Lead us Lord to a greater awareness of our
own brokenness, so that we may be more
accepting of others in their brokenness.

Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Lord in our daily lives help us to reach out
to you when times are tough. Anoint us
with your Holy Spirit and with fire so that
we can produce appropriate fruit.

Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

During this second week of Advent Lord,
help me by my daily life to prepare a way
for your coming. Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Our Father

FINAL THOUGHT

The Lord is my shepherd, there is nothing
I shall want. Fresh and green are the
pastures where he gives me repose. Near
restful waters he leads me, to revive my
drooping spirit

He guides me along the right path, he is
true to his name. If I should walk in the
valley of darkness no evil will I fear. You
are there with your crook and your staff;
with these you give me comfort. Surely
goodness and kindness shall follow me all
the days of my life. In the Lord's own

house shall I dwell for ever and ever.
(Psalm 23)





3RD SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Indeed, the Lord is near. (Phil. 4:4-5)

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: Isaiah 35:1-6.10

Second Reading: James 5:7-10

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 11:2-11

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, *'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?'*

Jesus answered, *'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.'*

As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: *'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: Look, I am going to send my*

messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is.'

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

John the Baptist asked his followers to ask Jesus is he the one who is to come? Jesus answered: Tell John what you see and hear: The blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear and the dead are raised to new life and the good news is proclaimed.

Have I witnessed any or all of these signs? Even more importantly have I contributed to any of those signs? Have I proclaimed the good news? In my home, my place of work, my community, my place of recreation and relaxation have I proclaimed the good news? Are my daily actions proclaiming the good news? Do I give life to my partner, or have we grown immune to each other? Likewise, with my children, neighbours, friends and work colleagues, do I bring them life, or do I diminish their lives? Have I by my words and actions encouraged others to grow? Have I inhibited them or stopped them from being their true selves because I didn't approve of the way they feel called to live their lives? Christ came that we may have life and have it to the full.

On this Gaudete Sunday can I rejoice because the Lord is alive all around me and in all his beautiful creation? I want to see you Lord more clearly in my daily life, in my family, in my partner, in my children, in my colleagues, in my neighbours and in your beautiful cosmos.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYER

Response: O Lord give us your love

Lord renew in us this Advent a sense of joy. Help us to rejoice knowing that no matter what may come our way in life that we are not alone and that you are always there for each one of us. Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord give us the courage of John the Baptist so that we too will go out into the wilderness in our lives and search for you and proclaim your good news. Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Jesus help us to realise that like Isaiah 'The Spirit of the Lord has been given to me. He has sent me to bring good news.' May we bring good news to all we meet and encounter in our daily living. Lord hear us we pray

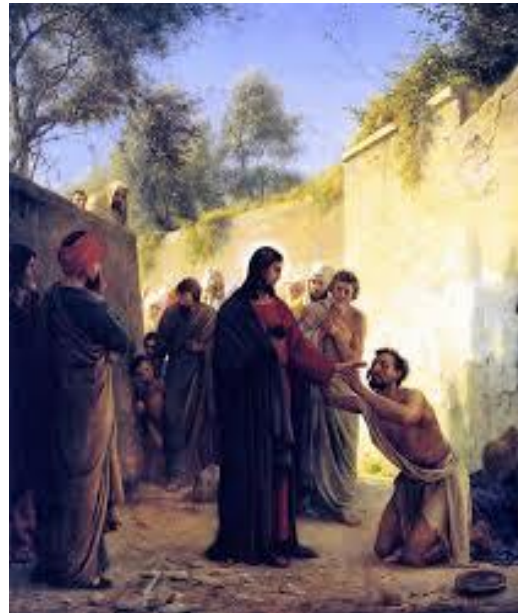
O Lord give us your love

Lord when we feel like giving up help us realise 'It is you Lord who keeps faith forever.' Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

FINAL THOUGHT

Christ has no body now but yours. No hands, no feet on earth but yours. Yours are the eyes through which he looks with compassion on this world. Yours are the feet with which he walks to do good. Yours are the hands through which he blesses all the world. Yours are the hands, yours are the feet, yours are the eyes, you are his body. Christ has no body now on earth but yours'. (Teresa of Avila)





4th SUNDAY OF ADVENT

PRAYER

Emmanuel God is with us. Alleluia

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: Isaiah 7:10-14

Second Reading: Romans 1:1-7

Read the Text

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to Matthew 1:18-24

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph, being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, and said, *'Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.'* Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: *'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means 'God-is-with-us'.*

When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.

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

While we are aware of Mary's encounter with the Angel Gabriel and Mary's great act of trust: 'Be it done unto me according to your word.' Today's Gospel tells us about Joseph's encounter with the Angel. Like Mary, Joseph also says yes to the angel. He did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: 'he took his wife to his home.'

Maybe we have become too familiar with Mary and Joseph's story. But what must it have been like for them both! How does Mary tell Joseph that she is pregnant? What are her fears and concerns about telling him? What is going on for Joseph? How did he respond to Mary's news? We know that he had decided to divorce Mary. Yet through the promptings of the Spirit he took Mary to his home. Our familiarity with the story maybe makes us miss how difficult a time this must have been for them both. They had no way of knowing how their story would unfold having said yes to the angel. Their yes transformed their story. Every parent knows how the arrival of a baby changes everything. For Mary and Joseph, it was no different. What were their dreams for their son? What were their worries for him? What were their expectations? Can you picture Mary and Joseph talking about him crawling, his first steps and his first words, checking on him in his sleep, making sure he was safe. What was Jesus like with his friends? What did his friends think of him? As we near the end of our Advent journey may we continue in our daily lives the good practices we have begun in Advent. All we really know about Joseph is that

having said yes, he got on with life and together with Mary raised Jesus. This too is our model for life. Getting on with living the life that is unfolding daily. Knowing that having said yes to Christ in our lives, like Joseph, all we need to do is to trust. This does not mean that life will be easy but rather that no matter what unfolds we know we are not alone, that Christ is always with us, waiting for us to invite him into our lives.

Allow for a period of five to ten minutes' silence

PRAYER

Response: O Lord give us your love.

Give us a greater understanding of the incarnation. Help us realise more fully 'the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us' Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord may Joseph's yes to the angel inspire us to say yes to the promptings of the Spirit in our lives. Lord hear us we pray

O Lord give us your love

Lord help us to see that it is in the ordinary daily events of our lives where we meet you. Open our eyes, our minds and our hearts to recognise you daily. Lord hear us we pray.

O Lord give us your love

Joseph heard the angel and said yes to the invitation and then went on and lived his life. Give us the courage Lord to say yes to your invitation and the strength to follow you. Lord hear us we pray

Lord give us your love

Rather than be discouraged by our struggles Lord help us to realise that you are always with us, waiting for us to invite you into our lives. Come, Lord Jesus, into our lives. Lord hear us we pray

Lord give us your love

FINAL THOUGHT

Nothing, therefore, can come between us and the love of Christ. (Romans 8: 35)



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 21st 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 25th, 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





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