

Waiting in Hope Longing for Peace

An Advent bulletin for home and parish
Week Two 2023

A Central Figure of Advent: John the Baptist

Over the weeks of Advent we encounter a number of key characters in the unfolding story of our salvation. In the Gospel this Sunday we are introduced to John the Baptist. An older cousin of Jesus, he was a prophet sent by God to prepare people for the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. His life was one of continually pointing to Jesus. When his mother, Elizabeth, was pregnant with John, she was visited by Mary, and John leapt in her womb. This revealed to Elizabeth that the child Mary carried was the Son of God.

John's desert ministry was all about calling people to be ready for Jesus and the change he would bring to their lives. John's call to repentance is not mere fire and brimstone, scare tactics, but is a call rooted in the belief that God is coming to His people and we need to be ready. John's message provokes us into action, calling us to turn back to God and to ready ourselves for Christ to come into our lives. Crucially, this personal readying involves looking beyond ourselves, to how we treat others and live with others. As followers of Jesus, it calls us to lives of justice and right relationship with one another; it calls us to acts of kindness and charity to neighbour and stranger.

**For the desert places in which we walk,
the streets we roam, the paths we cross,
guide our feet, take us to places where You would go.
Give us words that You would use
that in this Advent season of promise and preparation
we might point the way with John the Baptist
to the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**

~ written by John Birch

Looking ahead to the Third Sunday of Advent

St John Paul II began a tradition in Rome that continues today. On this Sunday, children and their families from across Rome come to St Peter's Square, bringing with them the figure of the infant Jesus from their crib. After the Angelus, the children raise up the figures and the Pope blesses them. The day is now also known affectionally as Bambinelli Sunday, the Italian for babies. In many places the blessed figure is wrapped and placed under the family Christmas tree to be unwrapped and finally placed in the crib at Christmas – reminding us of the first and most important gift of Christmas. Many of our parishes have introduced this practice so look out for an invitation in your local parish!

An Advent Tradition

While the Christmas tree is very much part of the Christmas season, over the course of Advent the tree will begin to appear in more and more homes, signalling that we are getting closer to the feast of Christmas.

In the midst of winter, the evergreen tree, dressed with lights, reminds us of the life and light that comes to us through Christ. The colourful decorations of the tree are a reminder of the paradise tree of the garden of Eden, hung with the bright colour of fruit.

*Families are invited
to say the following prayer
together
when they put up the
Christmas tree
in their home*



A Blessing Prayer

Lord God,
let your blessing come upon us
as we gather around this tree.
May its light
and the cheer it gives us
be a sign of the joy
that fills our hearts.
As we delight in this tree
may we come to
the knowledge and joy
of the Christmas gift
of salvation and peace.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
R. Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus.



An Advent hymn to think about.... O Comfort My People

People will recognise the traditional Irish setting of this Advent hymn as *Bí íosa im chroíse (Jesus, be in my heart)*. The words are based on the bible text of Isaiah 40 and were adapted and put to music by the late American Trappist monk, Chrysogonus Waddell.

The soothing melody carries a strong proclamation of hope on our Advent journey. In Isaiah 40, the prophet is looking ahead to a time of great pain when the People of God will experience exile from their homeland. His message from God to the people answers the questions they will have in the midst of their shock and suffering – Does God want to deliver us? Can God deliver us? Will God do it? God's response is yes; I have not forsaken you; I have not abandoned you; I am with you. These words come to us today in the midst of a world where there is terrible conflict, and millions are displaced from their homes and land. Isaiah's message from God, for all people, still holds true.

And comfort is not just about being soothed. It is about being fortified, strengthened, encouraged. This Advent, God is coming to us to bring us comfort, strength and encouragement, to speak to our hearts with the good news

An Advent Household Prayer

This week we invite you take a moment to light your Advent wreath /candle, to thank God for your Advent Day & to pray this prayer in union with the rest of our diocesan family, praying for peace in our world & lives.

Loving God,

as your light grows in the dark of winter,
bring its strength and its hope

to the people of the Holy Land and to all people
who suffer through war and conflict.

Just as you sent the star of Bethlehem
to lead the way to your Son,

guide all people - leaders and citizens –
to follow your ways of peace and justice.

As we remember the difficult journey of Mary and Joseph, may the Holy Family be a source of courage for each of us, helping us to reach out in friendship to the oppressed and displaced of this world.

Help us to see in the Christ-child we welcome this
Christmas,

the one who came to bring an end to all divisions.
Through Christ our Lord.

Amen.

And may the Lord bless us and keep us safe
this Advent day and always.

Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus, Prince of Peace



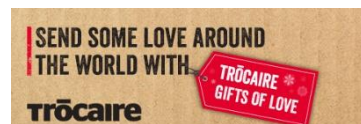
Weekly Advent Gospel Link

*Prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight his paths.*

On the second Sunday of Advent we hear again from Mark's Gospel. We are now in Year B of the three year cycle of Sunday readings named Year A, B and C. Today, the text we hear comes from the start of Mark's writing and he opens with a very direct message. Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is **the** Good News, the gospel. Mark's whole Gospel is about revealing for us who Jesus is.

Every day we listen out for the news of the day. But the Gospel of Jesus is the news of our salvation. And the message of John the Baptist points firmly to Jesus as the source of our salvation. The challenging figure of John the Baptist continues to call us, even today, to examine ourselves as we prepare to welcome Jesus into our lives once more. John reminds us that we are a baptised, forgiven people. We can be grateful for this forgiveness but we can also choose to be a better person as a result of it. And we can choose to share forgiveness with others in our lives. A key part of our Advent preparation is about figuring out this question: *what would it mean for me to be a better person, to be a forgiven and forgiving person, straightening the path for Jesus to take root in my life?*

See kandle.ie for weekly Scripture Sharing reflections on the Advent Sunday readings from homilies of the late Fr John Cummins & visit [Balyna parish Youtube channel](https://www.balyna.ie) on the parish website for Fr Seán Maher's short weekly Advent Scripture Study series



This Christmas, you can help children around the world with Trocaire's selection of sustainable and ethical gifts. A full list of possibilities are available at: <https://www.trocaire.org/news/help-children-around-the-world-with-trocaires-christmas-gifts/>