

# ADVENT

## Week 1

- 28** Make an Advent wreath. Light one candle. Pray for people whom the daily news reports in anguish and turmoil.
- 29** Pray by name for every family member.
- 30** Ask Jewish friends how they are celebrating Hanukkah.
- 1** Pray for families affected by war; spread peace.
- 2** Visit the night sky. Thank God for Earth, the evolving cosmos, for breath.
- 3** Text a person important to you what you appreciate in your relationship.
- 4** Pray a Hail Mary today. Ponder ways to use the grace and gifts that fill you for peace.

## Week 2

- 5** Celebrate St. Nicholas, bishop for the poor. Put treats in family members' shoes tonight.
- 6** Recall with family best Christmases ever. Plan to "repeat the sounding joy."
- 7** Watch someone who bothers you today. Thank the person for a good thing you notice.
- 8** Listen to Franz Schubert's "Ave Maria."
- 9** Ask St. Juan Diego to help you notice where roses bloom in December.
- 10** Write Christmas cards to your oldest and newest friends.
- 11** Work with your parish or Catholic Charities to buy gifts for a family in need.

## Week 3

- 12** Our Lady of Guadalupe protects the Americas. Ask her to bless our leaders.
- 13** Seek peace. Let a grudge go and all desires to get even.
- 14** Examine your closet and cupboard. Identify what you can share.
- 15** Care for Earth today. Use less water. Shut off lights. Wear sweaters.
- 16** Use as a mantra today, "Come, Jesus, bringer of peace." Repeat it as you walk to the bus or train or around the house.
- 17** Treat workers who serve you with respect.
- 18** Put up your manger scene. If you need one, download one at [goodgroundpress.com](http://goodgroundpress.com).

## Week 4

- 19** Make a personal connection with someone of another culture. Hold a door. Give a smile.
- 20** Say thank you to ten people today.
- 21** Celebrate the winter solstice. Light candles in darkness to name what you await and hope.
- 22** Invite a neighbor to pray with you around your advent wreath.
- 23** Go to see Christmas lights. Talk about what displays express as the reason for the season.
- 24** Tell the Christmas story. Involve the children in your midst.
- 25** Sing in joy or say:  
Go tell it on the mountain,  
over the hills and everywhere;  
go tell it on the mountain that  
Jesus Christ is born.

**SUNDAY**  
by **SUNDAY**

## Sunday Readings:

Jeremiah 33.14-16

1 Thessalonians 3.12-4.2

Luke 21.25-28, 34-36

**C**elebrate the new Church year by making a simple Advent wreath of greens with three blue or purple candles and one pink. Light one candle.

**LEADER:** We pray for an end to conflicts in our world—for families, refugees, and soldiers caught in wars they didn't start and can't finish.

**ALL:** We lift our heads in hope that love can build human community on our Earth.

**A**dvent begins the Church year with a gospel that imagines the end—Jesus' coming in glory. The gospel fairly froths with frightening images. Scary gospels can hardly worry us more than our everyday events and headlines.

Whole nations fall apart in war; their people anguish. Refugee families seek asylum from the wars that destroy fields, schools, homes—so many are children who need food, school, and health care. Where fields become deserts or lawless groups kidnap and pillage, migration follows.

On our home continent coyotes prey on migrants who pay to cross the Rio Grande. Refugees pile up at our borders awaiting asylum.

# GOSPEL

## Lift up your heads; your God is near.

**NARRATOR:** Jesus was talking to his disciples in the temple area.

**JESUS 1:** There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars. On the earth nations will anguish, perplexed by the roaring of the sea and the height of the waves.

**JESUS 2:** People will die of fright when they anticipate what is coming upon the earth. The powers of the heavens will be shaken.

**JESUS 3:** Then people will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with great power and glory.

**JESUS 1:** When these things happen, stand straight and lift up your heads, for your redemption is near at hand.

**JESUS 2:** Pay attention lest your hearts be depressed with



hangovers, drunkenness, and everyday worries. Then that great day will come upon you suddenly like a snare, for it will come upon all who dwell on the face of the earth.

**JESUS 3:** Stay watchful, praying for strength to escape what will happen and to stand before the Son of Man.

Luke 21.25-28, 34-36

**T**he gospel reminds us that no matter how threatening personal or world events, we live from beginning to end in the embrace of God. In our experience of being alive, we find God within us. In turning to one another and bridging our separate selves, we find God among us. In experiencing our human limits, we find we have heart and hope for mystery—God beyond us. The God of our beginning is the God of all we will become.

● **What gives you hope this Advent?**

## How must Christians live in the meantime?

**I**n Israel's history the destruction of the second temple proves an irreversible turning point. It ends Judaism as a religion centered in temple worship and sacrifice.

In each of the three gospels the chapters that lead up to Jesus' passion are much the same. Each day Jesus goes to the temple with his disciples to pray. Its outer courts provide a great public space for talking religion. Everybody brings him questions—priests, teachers, elders, scribes.

When Jesus is finally alone with his disciples, his conversation turns prophetic. He is no longer talking about the conflicts that lead to his passion but about the future beyond his death and resurrection. The temple that Herod spends 46 years refurbishing will be no more, not a stone left upon a stone.

**T**he anguish Luke describes in Sunday's gospel is what Jews and early Christians lived through when the Romans besieged Jerusalem. Their experience sounds very like that of refugees fleeing war today.

Jesus promises the Son of Man will come on a cloud in power and glory. This is a commanding image from the prophet Daniel, an apocalyptic book that promises good will triumph over evil. The prophet Daniel sees "one like a human one coming with the clouds of heaven" to assume kingship—"all people, nations, and languages shall serve him" (Daniel 7.13-14). Christians see Jesus in this prophecy.

Jesus insists his followers are not to worry. Rather than be afraid, Jesus recommends we stand up straight and raise our heads. Our salvation is near, our wholeness is here. In Jesus we find God incarnate among us and recognize the holy in him and in our human selves. Jesus gives us every reason to hope that the loving actions he teaches will get us through not only every day but any day.

● **What suggests to you the world is falling apart?**



● **What suggests we can build societies that work for the common good?**

**J**esus predicts the end of temple worship immediately after seeing a poor widow put two copper coins into the temple treasury. Although well-off people put much bigger gifts into the treasury, Jesus says she has given the most because she gives all she has to live on. He is connecting its demise with lack of care for the poor.

This calls us to focus our attention and watchfulness on the poor as we await Jesus' second coming. We can work so every one of God's children has what it takes to live a full human life. Each of us can respond to this challenge.

● **To whom will you reach out with your two coins?**

**S**unday's gospel also challenges us to pray. Only Luke records this final admonition. Praying is not just saying prayers. Praying expresses our attitude toward and relationship with God and one another. Praying involves how we see and sense, who we notice and appreciate. Prayer engages us with all we care about in the here and now.

In pausing to stand upright before God, we breathe not only air but heartening Spirit. We recommit to the way of love Jesus traveled, the way of building community, forgiving enemies, including outsiders.

Harvard professor Susan Abraham describes prayer as "a discipline of receptivity to the sacred," which reenchants us with the world. Prayer expects surprise and transformation. Prayer for the world puts the afflicted in our face as we open our hearts to them. In prayer we often sight a difference we can make and find strength that we are not alone in carrying it out.

Whether we see Jesus' coming again as a threat or a fulfillment, the gospel challenges us to stay watchful and pray for strength. In living consciously, attentive to people and life within and around us, we find God already with us.

● **What troubles does prayer keep in your face?**

● **What dulls your senses? What sharpens them? What practices help you live consciously?**

● **How does paying attention affect your life?**

## God promises new growth.

**J**eremiah's words in Sunday's first reading were written for people who had experienced the end of their world. In 587 B.C., the Babylonians demolished the temple in Jerusalem and led the king, princes, priests and many of the people of Judah into exile. A century before, a similar fate had befallen the northern kingdom, called Israel, at the hands of the Assyrians.

Jeremiah is proclaiming both a promise and a warning to the Israelites. God will raise up a king, Jeremiah promises, a righteous shoot or legitimate heir of the good king David, who will govern wisely and do what is just and right in the land. Then shall salvation come to Judah and Israel will dwell in security once again. In the meantime, the prophet warns, beware of the false shepherds who mislead the flock, scatter the sheep, and fail to care for them.

We read this passage at the beginning of Advent. At this point, the liturgy does not look toward the birth of a savior but toward the ultimate end of the world, and the reign of justice that David's true descendant will initiate.

On the Second Sunday of Advent next week, the liturgical readings and prayers will focus on Jesus' first coming among us. Christmas celebrates a promise—Jesus' coming in glory—as well as a gift, Jesus' birth among us.

Four weeks from now, as we gather around the manger to give thanks for the gift of Jesus, let us

consider how we can participate in his mission of bringing peace and justice to earth.

## God is our justice.

**"The days are coming," says the Holy One, "when I will fulfill the promise I made to the house of Israel and Judah. In those days, in that time, I will raise up for David a just shoot; he shall do what is right and just in the land. In those days Judah will be safe and Jerusalem will dwell secure. This is what people will call her: 'God is our justice.'"**

*Jeremiah 33.14-16*

- How might our Advent preparations be different if we consider Christmas a feast in anticipation of the return of the bringer of justice?
- What promises has God fulfilled in your life or in human history?

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on Manger Scene on our homepage. You can download the pages and print from your computer. Make the coloring a family and friends project.

## PRAY

**LEADER:** Let us breathe in deeply and breathe out, in and out. Take heart in the Spirit within. Jesus, the bringer of peace and justice, challenges us to live his mission in this Advent season.

**ALL:** We resolve to bring peace and justice where we live.

*Pause to make personal commitments or say them aloud.*

**LEADER:** May the Lord Jesus increase in us.

**ALL:** May we overflow with love for one another.

**LEADER:** May we stay attentive to God's nearness.

**ALL:** In night and day, friend and foe.

**LEADER:** May people say of our city and nation—

**ALL:** God, our justice, lives here.

**LEADER:** Let us join hands and pass the energy of peace to the persons whose hands we hold. Let us connect our hopes for the common good of our world.



## Make Your Own Manger Scene

Artist Gertrud Mueller Nelson has drawn a manger scene for you to color and cut out. You can tape the figures around small paper cups to make them stand better.

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