

**Sunday of the year/Feast day**  
**ADVENT SUNDAY**

**The first Sunday of the Christian year**  
**Colour: purple**

If you go into a church at this time you may see: altar coverings and priests' robes in the colour purple, or a candle stand with five candles on it. Find out more, below.

Lectionary readings Catholic/Anglican/other  
**Readings for Advent Sunday**

Church of England year B

Isaiah 64.1-9  
Psalm 80.1-8,18-20\*  
1 Corinthians 1.3-9  
Mark 13.24-37

Roman Catholic Year B  
Isaiah 63.16-17; 64.1. 3-8  
Psalm 79.2-3; 15-16; 18-19  
1 Corinthians 1.3-9  
Mark 13 33-37

**Sermon/homily ideas**

***Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming***

*Mission focus:*

Jesus' command to us today is to stay awake.

We can often get complacent about our task to bring the Good News into people's lives. We 'nod off'.

We are not just marking time, but preparing for Jesus' return. Is this preparation something we have ceased to believe in?

We are supposed to be building up the kingdom of God so that all may see it. We are supposed to be preparing the way of the Lord. What are we doing about it in our own situation?

To stay awake, we first have to wake up!

*Contemporary spirituality focus*

Jesus' command is to stay awake.

But in our own society there is a great deal of pressure to stay awake for other reasons. People work longer and longer hours and have less and less time at home. Children have educational targets to meet.

Many people turn to stimulants or drugs to help them stay awake, - advertisements for Pro-Plus or other caffeine based products.

This is not real wakefulness, but distracts from what Jesus wants, which is to have the time and space to focus on God.

So people get into 'spiritual' practices which provide stress relief and a kind of dreamy escape from reality.

Jesus wants us to be spiritually alert and preparing the way for God.

This means challenging and changing the way we live, not just providing an escape from it.

### **Discussion questions**

- **Reflect on what has happened in your church and community during the past 12 months. What things have happened for you to build on? What things need to be left behind?**
- **If the Son of God were to be born shortly in your community, what preparations would you have to make? So, what preparations *are* you going to make?**
- **Make a list of New Year Resolutions for your church: under the headings 'necessary', 'desirable' and 'blue sky'. Where is the energy for these activities?**

### **Bible studies**

#### **Group activities**

Making an Advent Candle

The meaning of an Advent candle (Sally Dakin,

<http://www.grovebooks.co.uk/resources/W180adventcandles.html>)

Making an Advent wreath

Making a Jesse tree

<http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19971201/FRIDGE/FRIDGE1>

Links [www.refuel.org.uk](http://www.refuel.org.uk)

<http://www.catholic.org/clife/advent/>

For kids:

[http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/bluepeter/active/makes/make\\_adventcalendar.shtml](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cbbc/bluepeter/active/makes/make_adventcalendar.shtml)

### **Icon, painting or other visual**

### **Poems and prayers**

**Music**, including 'hymn of the week'

O come, O come, Emmanuel,  
And ransom captive Israel,  
That mourns in lonely exile here  
Until the Son of God appear.

*Refrain*

*Rejoice! Rejoice!*  
*Emmanuel shall come to thee, O Israel.*

O come, Thou Wisdom from on high,  
Who orderest all things mightily;  
To us the path of knowledge show,  
And teach us in her ways to go.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free  
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;  
From depths of hell Thy people save,  
And give them victory over the grave.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Day-spring, come and cheer  
Our spirits by Thine advent here;  
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,  
And death's dark shadows put to flight.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Key of David, come,  
And open wide our heavenly home;  
Make safe the way that leads on high,  
And close the path to misery.

*Refrain*

O come, O come, great Lord of might,  
Who to Thy tribes on Sinai's height  
In ancient times once gave the law  
In cloud and majesty and awe.

*Refrain*

O come, Thou Root of Jesse's tree,  
An ensign of Thy people be;  
Before Thee rulers silent fall;  
All peoples on Thy mercy call.

*Refrain*

O come, Desire of nations, bind  
In one the hearts of all mankind;  
Bid Thou our sad divisions cease,  
And be Thyself our King of Peace.

## *Refrain*

### **Where does it come from?**

This hymn dates from the 12<sup>th</sup> century and was originally written in Latin and was translated into English by John M Neale. The music dates from the 15<sup>th</sup> century.

### **What is it about?**

The hymn is about the coming of Jesus Christ into the world, and draws on many references from the Bible, especially from prophetic writings. The first verse refers to Jesus as 'Emmanuel' which means 'God with us'. The prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 7.14) wrote that a young woman would bear a son and call him Immanuel, and in St Matthew's gospel, an angel reminds Joseph that he should not cast off the pregnant Mary, but marry her as he intended, because in her the prophecy is coming true.

In the prophetic writings, the Jewish people (Israel) have experienced exile and captivity and in those times especially have waited for the salvation of God to come. They are promised a Messiah, a Saviour, and so we are all like Israel in exile, waiting for our Saviour to come. This Saviour is Jesus. So the refrain is a shout of joy, a promise that God's promises of salvation are true, and that is what we look forward to in the Advent season: the coming to us of Jesus Christ.

The next verses use different titles for Jesus which are found in the Bible. Jesus is Wisdom, coming down from heaven to teach us how to be reconnected to God. It reminds us that the world is ordered and that God has a plan for the whole of creation. If we want to know what it is, we must pay attention to what Jesus has got to say.

Jesus is called 'Rod of Jesse' because he is a human being as well as God's being. This refers to another prophecy of Isaiah (1.1.) about a person being born from the line of Jesse, the father of King David of Israel. That is why he is also called the 'key of David' (Isaiah 22.22). St Matthew also sets this out in the beginning of his gospel, making the point that Jesus has a human history and heritage. He is one of the Jewish people and has their religious heritage. His purpose is to undo the story of the Fall in the book of Genesis, and show people that death is not the ultimate human destiny. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, no one need ever be afraid of death again. The 'victory o'er the grave' reminds us of St Paul's triumphant cry in 1 Corinthians 15.55. Jesus is also called the 'root' of Jesse's tree and in some churches you can see wall paintings or stained glass windows of Jesse trees, presenting Jesus as part of a human family tree but also placed by God within human history, to make sense of that history and to save its people.

<http://www.domestic-church.com/CONTENT.DCC/19971201/FRIDGE/FRIDGE1>

Jesus is called the 'Day-Spring' because in St Luke's gospel, (1.78), Zechariah, father of John the Baptist, speaks of Jesus in a prophecy and calls him a dawn light shining into the darkness of the human condition and bringing hope to everybody.

We are also reminded of the importance of the giving of the Ten Commandments to the people of Israel by God through his servant Moses, and the giving of God's Law to those people so that we could learn to live the way God wants us to. Again this verse connects us to biblical history and to Jesus' origins, reminding us that we must seek to do God's will obediently, following the commandments and listening to Jesus who both sums up and embodies God's holy law. Jesus' presence silences the rulers of the world, and becomes the focus for God's mercy and justice.

The end of the hymn is where we join with the prophets in expressing our longing for a saviour and joy in knowing that with Jesus' coming, God has answered our prayers. Jesus is finally called the 'desire of nations' following the prophet Haggai (2.7) building on a prophetic picture of peace and unity between all people and united in love and thanksgiving for the gift of a saviour. It is God's wish that Jesus will be able to get rid of divisions between people, and be the 'King of Peace', so the hymn ends with the hope that Advent can restore for us a picture of the world as God wants it to be, peaceful, united and loving.

**Join with us: web based resource for prayer and reflection**

**Walk with (name) through some meditations for Advent Sunday**

**Thought for the walk**

*Come God, come into this world. Come and be with us.*



This is one of my favourite places (picture). Stop here and think of all the things we've done in the past year. (list of things in life/church etc).

Prayer

This is my home/church etc In the next year I intend to.....

Prayer

Let's stop here and light the first candle/open window on calendar or other