

1-12-2024

## First Sunday of Advent - 1 December 2024

Gerard Moore

### Urgent Appeal - Pastoral Liturgy needs help

Follow this and additional works at: <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy>



Part of the [Catholic Studies Commons](#), and the [Liturgy and Worship Commons](#)

#### Recommended Citation

Moore, Gerard. "First Sunday of Advent - 1 December 2024." *Pastoral Liturgy* 55, no. 1 (2024): 1-8. <https://researchonline.nd.edu.au/pastoral-liturgy/vol55/iss1/4>

This Liturgical Resource is brought to you by ResearchOnline@ND. It has been accepted for inclusion in Pastoral Liturgy by an authorized administrator of ResearchOnline@ND. For more information, please contact [researchonline@nd.edu.au](mailto:researchonline@nd.edu.au).





# 1 December 2024

## First Sunday of Advent

Reflection by Gerard Moore

### The Liturgical Season of Advent

The season of Advent signals to the faithful that Christmas is approaching. In doing this it also reveals the deeper liturgical understanding of the celebration of the nativity, providing a theological and spiritual reference point for the many cultural, social and devotional meanings and practices attached to this joyous feast

There are two themes underpinning Advent. The first is the mystery of the incarnation. Christ, the light, has come into our world and dwelt among us as one like us, fully human and yet fully divine: *And the word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory* (Jn 1:14). The second is that Christ will return and complete the renewal of all things in grace. The sense is that our celebration of the incarnation fills us with hope as we await with anticipation his definitive coming when the entire creation is taken up into the full glory of God. The season reflects a wonderful play on words that we find at the close of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, where the translation reads: *Our Lord, come!* (1 Cor 16:22). Yet the text is ambiguous, and either can mean 'the Lord has come' or be an invitation to the Lord to come. This double sense is captured in Advent.

### The Advent Devotions

The Advent Wreath is a popular devotion for this season, focusing on the twin themes of the light and the coming near of Christ.

### Advent 2024: our context

The anomaly of celebrating Advent in the Australian summer always gives pause for thought. There is something of the original nature of the season that we miss. The northern incoming winter, the house-bound farms, towns and cities, and the danger of snow, ice and freezing are all lost to us. There is a sense of the apocalyptic in the liturgical celebrations calibrated to the northern winter and its dangers. That is why the advent readings and prayers move us to contemplate the coming of the light as a way to hold onto hope.

Our weather and summer holidays do not form a natural encouragement to take up these lines of thought and prayer. We are looking forward to water, beach, holidays, family, sport and Christmas together. Our prayers are for celebration, family, safety and joy, and importantly for those less fortunate, for those who are lonely and those who are alone.

Yet 2024 carries more difficult portents. They have deeply disturbing content which is affecting our lives and in turn infecting our civil discourse. We cannot cocoon ourselves from them.

As I write, major events are unfolding. The impact of two massive hurricanes on the Eastern states of the USA is being counted. There are lives lost, vast numbers of homes and businesses destroyed and lives turned upside down, all in a country of vast wealth and resources. The rebuilding of towns and infrastructure will take a massive effort. The remaking of lives will take longer. There is a chance that more hurricanes will come in the wake of the two monster storms. We are not indifferent to this, yet we are becoming accustomed to the toxic and divisive rhetoric that does not admit climate change, the impoverished state of our environment, and the call for ecological conversion from Pope Francis. This style of rhetoric is bruited at us in its disregard for truth and the continuous stream of violent and vitriolic language we see during the US presidential campaign.

Why does this matter? Liturgically, Advent is a reminder that there is hope and there is light. Conversely it is a reminder for us to be aware of how dark the darkness is. The denial around climate and the racist, nationalistic vitriol of that overseas election affect our own conversations and leave us off guard about the creeping distortion of our discourse. It is a warping of the Catholic imagination that we cannot allow. Australia and its neighbours have their own climate challenges, and we cannot be talked out of facing them. We also have deep misgivings about the crisis between the peoples of Israel, Palestine and Lebanon. It touches our family, friends, neighbours and nation. We cannot allow the distorted language, racial tropes and nationalist dog-whistling to inhibit compassion and empathy, and to speak against violence of all stripes.

Our liturgical celebration of Advent may be against the grain of the initial feast and its wintery envelope, yet it serves as a reminder that there is a dread current of darkness in our airwaves and across our civil and family relationships, and we are called to be aware. We are also called to be generous. What will be our Christmas gift to those far from our shores who are suffering?

## **Introduction**

What does it mean to be alert and to be on watch? Our readings direct us to the unnerving reality of 'darkness' in society and history. In this they are a reminder of Advent as preparation for the feast of the coming of the light.

## **Penitential Act**

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you will come in glory as the Son of Man. Lord have mercy.

You call us to stay awake. Christ have mercy.

You teach us how to pray with confidence. Lord have mercy.

## Collect

*Grant your faithful, we pray, almighty God,  
the resolve to run forth to meet your Christ  
with righteous deeds at his coming,  
so that, gathered at his right hand,  
they may be worthy to possess the heavenly kingdom.*

Advent opens with a call to run forth to meet the Christ, however it is not the babe in the manger. The Christ to whom we run is the one who is to come, in whom is the fulfillment of all things. Advent, then, begins with a focus on the second coming of Christ, a perspective carried in the first Advent Preface: *when he comes again in glory and majesty.*

Our collect has a sense of energy and purpose. The use of 'run' is quite common in the ancient orations and conjures something of that running to the empty tomb on Easter morning, and even the eagerness of the forgiving father to meet his prodigal son (Lk 1:11-32). We need to be mindful that the prayer is a petition. There is no claim to privilege or worthiness here. Rather we are seeking the eagerness to propel ourselves to the coming One because we have in grace lived as fully as possible within his righteousness. The end point is to be 'gathered' into Christ, conveying warmth and intimacy: disciples are gathered. Further to 'possess' means to fully belong and to be taken up by. With the coming of Christ is our perfection (in his righteous deeds), belonging (gathered) and fulfilment (possession).

*Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.*

## First Reading

### **Jeremiah 33:14-16**

Our Advent readings open with the proclamation of the Lord our Justice. It is a statement of hope beyond the environment of despair and disappointment that was the lot of the Jewish people in exile.

## Responsorial Psalm

### **Psalm 24(25):4-5,8-9,10,14**

*To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.*

The psalmist calls us to lift our eyes and hearts to God. As Jeremiah proclaims the justice of God we also know that the coming of the Messiah in Jesus of Nazareth draws us all into hopefulness.

## Second Reading

### 1 Thessalonians 3:12-4:2

To strengthen the community, Paul prays for an increase in love, enabling the members to conduct themselves within the holiness of God

## Gospel Reading

### Luke 21:25-28, 34-36

In the Gospel we are reminded that The Christ will return, and to live now so that we may stand before God.

## Reflection

Our Advent readings open with the proclamation of the Lord **our** Justice. It is a statement of hope beyond the environment of despair and disappointment that was the lot of the Jewish people in exile. This text within the Book of Jeremiah apparently was written later and added to the corpus of poems from the prophet. The reading opens into the period where the exile was coming to a close, and with it, the uncertainty whether it would be better to stay in exile or return to Jerusalem or simply merge into the empire of the Persians. The poet maintains the people's hope. There will be a time when their homeland will be safe for them. There will be a time when God's city will be secure. There will be a time when the people more strongly feel the justice of God. Indeed, they will feel it as 'our' justice, justice brought by God for them. With it are a couple of features. This justice is that already promised by God, so it has begun to take hold. It is for a united 'house', Israel and Judah together, the two parts of the kingdom at peace. It is framed within the legend of the beloved king David. The line of David may be no longer extant, but the spiritual lineage of David's leadership is maintained.

Referring back to our introduction to the theological dynamics of Advent, we can see how this reading introduces us to the central themes of the season: hope, looking forward, the coming of the one, the reign of justice. But our Advent this year offers a more difficult reflection on this reading. The theology of Davidic homeland and the divine justice it embodies remain close to the hearts of the people of today's Israel and drives their response to threat. We all seek that there will be a time when their homeland will be safe for them. We also know that the plight of the Palestinian peoples, the Christian communities in Gaza and the people of Lebanon are also to be understood in light of justice. It is a difficult reading in today's context.

The first Letter to the Thessalonians has two endings. It seems that Paul finished and then got up another burst of energy, and on he went. Our passage is from the first 'ending', and contains a moral exhortation: *Finally, we earnestly ask and exhort you ...* Of course there is also a second letter to the same group. It seems Paul was keen to keep in correspondence with this community.

As with our first reading from Jeremiah, the text puts forward a theology for Advent. It is not quite 'behave yourself' but a richer spiritual exhortation. Beginning with a prayer that God will increase the love in the midst of the community, it also acts as a reminder to the women and men that love is at the centre of the Christian life and our conduct should take its cue from this.

With this there are some deeper concepts. Our love should reflect the holiness of God. 'Holiness' is an attribute of God alone: for Paul we are called to love as God loves. It is wholehearted and blameless. Here is the sense of what it means to 'please' God. It is far from doing things to win favour. Rather it is to act in such a way that God 'recognises' the divine within us and the transformation it achieves as we take up the fullness of being loved by God. This transformation is the grounds for Jesus recognising us as his own when he returns. In the midst of all the conflictual and malevolent language Paul reminds that the language of the Catholic is love.

Again, we can see the theology of Advent being opened for us. Right behaviour, loving as God loves and living within the 'recognition' of God all are concerned with our conversion. These match one of the ancient origins of Advent as a season in preparation for baptism.

With this is the understanding of the Second Coming of Christ. This becomes a theme of the final two weeks of the season.

Our Gospel reading, made from two passages from the one chapter in Luke, aligns with our first two readings. In this, two Advent themes are brought to the fore. The Christ will return, and consequently live now so that you may stand before God. Yet this is a stark reading, with apocalyptic currents and a degree of despair. In a way, the evangelist has Jesus addressing the Christian community of the future. Just as in Luke's Gospel Jesus soon will face his passion, so will the future church soon enough face a time of trial and passion of its own.

The trigger for this is a set of events that are part of the life of the community Luke is addressing in his narrative. Already the Temple has fallen, already Jerusalem has fallen, what then is left? The answer is that life in Christ does not mean escape from the realities of history, but that there is another outcome, one formed in Christ. In response, the Gospel teller is calling his hearers to live within the actual moment, to be aware of what is around, to avoid escapism, to wait upon the Lord.

The apocalyptic nature of the text can be jarring, and that is the intention of the narrator. We are meant to be confronted, to be called to account, to be roused and surprised. Interestingly there is a degree of apocalyptic thought in our culture at present, but more to the point there is a strong dystopian element to our stories, novels and streaming series at present.

What then is the time of trial we are facing, what is the 'passion' we are undergoing. The apocalyptic note of the readings and the dystopian preference in literature and the arts is pointing us to the crises which engulf us. To close off, we will speak into climate change and the dangerous predicament of our sister earth. In the face of these, we are called to be vigilant and to have the strength. In the coming feast of

the nativity, we take the incarnation of Christ as the centrepiece of our lives. We cannot take the incarnation with full seriousness without taking up our current international situation, our human condition and the condition of creation.

Perhaps it is time to bring in Pope Francis:

This sister now cries out to us because of the harm we have inflicted on her by our irresponsible use and abuse of the goods with which God has endowed her. We have come to see ourselves as her lords and masters, entitled to plunder her at will. The violence present in our hearts, wounded by sin, is also reflected in the symptoms of sickness evident in the soil, in the water, in the air and in all forms of life. This is why the earth herself, burdened and laid waste, is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor; she 'groans in travail' (Rom 8:22). *Laudato Si!* paragraph 2.

Come Lord Jesus!

Come the church of Jesus the Lord!



# Prayer of the Faithful

## Introduction

The psalmist calls us to lift our souls in faithfulness and love so we have the confidence to offer these needs of our Church and our world in the hope that they will be embraced with divine love.

## Petitions

We pray for our Church. We pray for Pope Francis and all the leaders of our Church as we move towards the implementation of the Synod of Bishops. May we all be open to the power of the Spirit as we are led on our synodal journey.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for world leaders in this very difficult time. May they open their hearts to the needs of all people and know that in the end it will only be love that really matters.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the created world. May we increase in our desire to protect what God has created and wholeheartedly enter into the love of our earth that Pope Francis tells us is 'burdened and laid waste, and is among the most abandoned and maltreated of our poor'.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those caught up in war in the Middle East. May all those who seek power and territory be opened to the need for peace and security for all human beings.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for ourselves as we gather here at the beginning of Advent. May we remain alert and welcoming, stand erect and hold our heads high to greet our liberation as we heed the gospel.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who have died that they may be in eternal glory. We pray for those who mourn that they will be comforted by our community in fruitful ways.

*(Pause)* Lord hear us. OR We pray to the Lord.

## Conclusion

Eternally loving God, we offer these prayers in the hopefulness of Jeremiah because we know that you will listen to our needs and grant them in Jesus' name through the power of the Holy Spirit.

**Amen.**



## Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

First Sunday of Advent, Year C (1 December 2024)

Title	AOV	AOV2	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
Advent litany					253	279
Christmas is coming (verse 1)			55			
City of God	57				453	498
Come, O long expected Jesus				657	232	
Come to set us free					233	277
O come, O come Emmanuel	174			763	242	285
O Emmanuel			52			
Open the heavens		163			243	
The coming of our Lord				816	248	
To you, O Lord, I lift my soul				850	632	
Wait for the Lord.					251	283
Wake, awake! For night is flying				853		
Wake, O wake, and sleep no longer						282
Wake, O wake! the night is dying!					252	

Title	AOVNG	S&S1	S&S2
City of God		106	
Come, O Lord			287
Come, O Lord, and set us free	31		
Emmanuel			290
Find us ready		109	
I trust in you			291
To you, O God, I lift up my soul		60	
To you, O Lord			251

## Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 24: *To you, O Lord, I lift my soul.*

	CWB	GA	JOBC	LPC	PM
Psalm 24	168, 592	26	8	5	22

## Music selections by Michael Mangan

O Emmanuel (TT/SYJ/CWBII) [Gathering, Communion, Recessional]  
 Come, Lord Jesus, come CH & V1 (SYJ/ CWBII) [Advent Wreath]  
 Help me know your ways (FWS) *based on Ps 24 (25)* [Gifts]  
 To you, O Lord (LCC) *Ps 24/25 (Chn's Lectionary)* [Psalm, Gifts]  
 Watch out, wake up (TT/SYJ) [CHILDREN: Gathering, Recessional]  
 We come, we come (TWB) [Communion – esp V3]  
 Waiting for the child (TT/SYJ) [Non-Scriptural Reflection - Gifts]