

2025 Advent Reflections

This Advent we are using some hymns to reflect on the meaning of Advent. You may begin by reading the hymn for the week, then each day reflect on one of the verses, or you may like to set aside some time once a week to reflect on the words of the hymn. Each week there are some suggestions of some activities that you may like to be involved with, and a prayer for the week.

Week 1. Reflecting on our Lord's Return.

This week our hymn is O Come, O Come, Emmanuel. Our diocesan theme in this our anniversary year has been "Looking back, Moving Forward." This ancient hymn invites us to look back to some OT prophecies of the coming of the Messiah, as well as looking forward to Jesus' birth and his coming again in glory.

O Come, O Come, Emmanuel

1. O come, O come, Emmanuel,
And ransom captive Israel,
That mourns in lonely exile here,
Until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

2. O come, Thou Rod of Jesse, free
Thine own from Satan's tyranny;
From depths of hell Thy people save,
And give them victory o'er the grave.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

3. O come, Thou Dayspring, from on high,
And cheer us by Thy drawing nigh;
Disperse the gloomy clouds of night,
And death's dark shadows put to flight.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

4. O come, Thou Key of David, come
And open wide our heav'nly home;
Make safe the way that leads on high,
And close the path to misery.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

5. O come, Adonai, Lord of might,
Who to Thy tribes, on Sinai's height,
In ancient times didst give the law
In cloud and majesty and awe.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel.

Trans. John Mason Neale

Prayer

As we look forward to celebrating Christ's coming at Christmas, and his coming again in glory, may we be people who rejoice in your love and share that love with those we meet this week. AMEN

Activities for the week

- In Your Parish – Over morning tea during Advent try making some traditional Christmas Decorations that can be given out at Christmas services (eg paper chains, cardboard stars) Write a short message of hope on your decoration.
- Make an advent wreath or find a special candle that you light at each evening meal.
- Do something for others – Contact someone lonely or unwell – send a card, take some flowers.

Week 2. John the Baptist prepares the way.

This week we focus on John the Baptist, the final prophet of Israel and the forerunner of the Messiah. This hymn invites us to examine ourselves and to welcome our Saviour.

On Jordan's bank

On Jordan's bank the Baptist's cry,
Announces that the Lord is nigh:
Come then and hearken, for he brings.
Glad tidings from the King of kings.

E'en now the air, the sea, the land
Feel that their Maker is at hand;
The very elements rejoice,
And welcome Him with cheerful voice.

Then cleansed be every Christian breast,
And furnished for so great a Guest!
Yea! let us each our hearts prepare
For Christ to come and enter there.

For Thou art our salvation, Lord,
Our refuge and our great reward,
Without thy grace our souls must fade,
And wither like a flower decayed.

Stretch forth thine hand, to heal our sore,
And make us rise, to fall no more;
Once more upon thy people shine,
And fill the world with love divine.

To Him, who left the throne of Heaven
To save mankind, all praise be given :
Like praise be to the Father done,
And Holy Spirit, Three in One.

Charles Coffin

Prayer

Loving God, thank you for the people in my life who have shown me the way to Jesus. AMEN

Activities for the week

- Do a letterbox drop in your street with leaflets that advertise your parish's Christmas services.
- Donate a Christmas gift or money to your local Anglicare or local charity.

Week 3. Mary says yes

This week we focus on Mary as she says yes to God. Mary's actions challenge us to ask ourselves what God is asking us to do for him. Can we, like Mary, say yes?

The angel Gabriel from heaven came

The angel Gabriel from heaven came,
his wings as drifted snow, his eyes as flame:
'From God, all hail,' the angel said to Mary,
'most highly favoured lady!'
Gloria!

'Fear not, for you shall bear a holy child,
by him shall we to God be reconciled;
his name shall be Emmanuel, the long-foretold:
most highly favoured lady!'
Gloria!

Then gentle Mary humbly bowed her head:
'To me be as it pleases God,' she said,
'My soul shall praise and magnify his holy name.'
Most highly favoured lady!
Gloria!

'And so,' she said, 'how happy I shall be!
All generations will remember me;
for God has kept his promises to Israel.'
Most highly favoured lady!
Gloria!

Of her, Emmanuel - the Christ - was born
in Bethlehem, upon that Christmas morn.
And Christian folk throughout the world will ever say,
'Most highly favoured lady!'
Gloria!

Sabine Baring Gould

Prayer

Loving Father we are inspired by Mary, and her ability to say yes to you. May we be people who hear your words to us, and respond to them. AMEN

Activities for the week

- Share some Christmas baking.
- Make some old-style Christmas decorations for your church or for a friend (eg holly and ivy, more paper chains.)

Week 4. Jesus is born

This week we look towards Christmas and the birth of the Christ Child. This hymn reminds us that this is no ordinary child, but one who is welcomed by both angels and shepherds. He is the King of kings and our Saviour.

What child is this?

What child is this, who, laid to rest
On Mary's lap is sleeping
Whom angels greet with anthems sweet
While shepherds watch are keeping?
This, this is Christ the King
Whom shepherds guard and angels sing
Haste, haste to bring Him praise
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

Why lies He in such mean estate
Where ox and ass are feeding?
Come, have no fear; God's son is here
His love all loves exceeding
Nails, spear shall pierce Him through
The Cross He bore for me, for you
Hail, hail, the Saviour comes
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

So bring Him incense, gold and myrrh
Come, peasant, king, to own Him
The King of kings salvation brings
Let loving hearts enthrone Him
Raise, raise the song on high
While Mary sings a lullaby
Joy, joy, for Christ is born
The Babe, the Son of Mary!

W. Chatterton Dix

Prayer

Thank you, God, for sending Jesus to be born as one of us. Thank you for all that his life, death and resurrection mean for us. May our celebration of Christmas help us to your love to those we meet. AMEN

Activities for the week

- Invite someone to go with you to one of the Christmas services .
- Share a meal with someone lonely.
- Put a Christmas message of hope in your front window or on social media.

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