



Advent | Faith

Within our Catholic tradition, important symbols that capture the essence of Advent are the evergreen and the light; both are used to create wreaths. The candles placed within the wreath acknowledge the light of Christ not only in the world, but also in our hearts. One candle is lit each Sunday until all four candles are lit, and sometimes a fifth candle is lit on Christmas. As Christmas draws nearer, each candle brings a little more light into the darkness, the light of Christ burns brighter and stronger as Christ's birth approaches.

At the beginning of our prayer, you are invited to light a candle in contemplative anticipation of faith.

Faith & Anticipation

Each of the candles represents an aspect of preparation during the season of Advent. Purple is the primary colour associated with Advent. Within the Catholic Church it symbolises **penance, preparation, and sacrifice**. During Advent, we reflect on our lives and work on becoming better-versions-of-ourselves in preparation for Jesus' coming.

The candle of Faith is called the "Bethlehem Candle" as a reminder of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem.

Be a beacon of hope in this turbulent world ... from homes that are a light on the hill.

The XXII General Chapter

Scripture

Mark 1:1-18.

The Proclamation of John the Baptist

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in the prophet Isaiah,

"See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you,

who will prepare your way;

the voice of one crying out in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord,

make his paths straight.'"

John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. And people from the whole Judean countryside and all the people of Jerusalem were going out to him, and were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. He proclaimed, "The one who is more powerful than I is coming after me; I am not worthy to stoop down and untie the thong of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit."

Scripture Reflection

Pope Francis reflects on Mark's Gospel during Advent

John the Baptist knew his role was “to prepare the people, prepare people’s hearts for an encounter with the Lord”, ... St John knew that his gift for speaking, preaching, moving peoples’ hearts and attracting a crowd had a purpose that had nothing to do with him and everything to do with Jesus.

As a model for evangelising, St John the Baptist demonstrated that “a Christian does not proclaim him or herself, but another, and prepares the way for another, the Lord. A Christian must know how to discern and must discern the truth from that which seems to be true, but isn’t,” the Pope said. Finally, “a Christian knows how to diminish so that the Lord increases in the hearts and souls of others”.

Pray | Lectio Divina

A recurring thought for me ever since the COVID-19 pandemic erupted is how what happened in Mary’s life might shed light on this moment of crisis. The desire for our communities and families to be real homes requires us to become more conscious that the light we want others to see is coming from beyond us. She confronted her fears and doubts in three steps that might be helpful to us today: 1) we experience doubt and are afraid, so we ask God what is going on, why this now? 2) we feel ourselves like small children in the hands of God and we place our trust in God. Fiat! Let it be! 3) we bend our shoulders to the task and play our part to the best of our ability in serving others. Like Mary, in the face of uncertainty and fear, we need faith, trust and passion for God and humanity as solid ground for moving forward.

Homes of Light. Circular 2020 Br Ernesto Sanchez Barba
FMS.p.15

LECTIO: Read the following Scripture two or three times.

Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ the Son of God. As it is written in Isaiah the prophet: Behold, I am sending my messenger ahead of you; he will prepare your way. A voice of one crying out in the desert: “Prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.” John the Baptist appeared in the desert proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. People of the whole Judean countryside and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem were going out to him and were being baptized by him in the Jordan River as they acknowledged their sins. John was clothed in camel’s hair, with a leather belt around his waist. He fed on locusts and wild honey. And this is what he proclaimed: “One mightier than I is coming after me. I am not worthy to stoop and loosen the thongs of his sandals. I have baptized you with water; he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”



John baptizing Christ in the Jordan by David Zelenka

MEDITATIO: After the reading, take some time to reflect on one or more of the following questions:

What word or words in this passage caught your attention?

What in this passage comforted you?

What in this passage challenged you?

ORATIO: Read the Scripture passage one more time.

Bring to the Lord the praise, petition, or thanksgiving that the Word inspires in you.

CONTEMPLATIO: Read the Scripture passage again, followed by this reflection:

What conversion of mind, heart, and life is the Lord asking of me?

Prepare the way of the Lord. How do I share my faith with others, through word and deed? What can I do this week to help others encounter Christ?

They acknowledged their sins. How often do I seek forgiveness from those I have wronged? How often do I seek God’s forgiveness in the Sacrament of Penance? Do I make time each day to acknowledge my sinfulness and ask God’s grace to help me do better?

One mightier than I is coming after me. What events or places make me most aware of God’s greatness and power? Do I rely on God’s grace or expect to do it all on my own?

After a period of silent reflection and/or discussion, recite the Lord’s Prayer.