

Advent prepares us to experience blessing. It is a season that encourages us, like the Magi and the shepherds, to seek and to find, to wonder and to believe, to rejoice and to glorify God. Joan Chittister says that it is in Advent that we begin to prepare for Easter. "The journey that begins on the first Sunday of Advent at the beginning of this new liturgical year will not end till we, too, reach the cross and the empty tomb, remember the Ascension and the going from us, recall Pentecost and the outpouring of the Advocate, and call to mind again the Second Coming at the end of time. Then, perhaps, we will be centred on our own final step into the arms of God when this time ends." Then we will experience the fullness of the blessing of Christ, who is all in all.

Sunday: John 20.24-29 *Thomas and Jesus*

Monday: Luke 1.39-45 *Blessed are you and blessed is the fruit of your womb*

Tuesday: Genesis 12.1-4a *God's promise of blessing to Abraham and all the families of the earth*

Wednesday: Isaiah 30.18 *God's promise for all those who wait for him*

Thursday: Jeremiah 17.7-8 *Trusting in God for blessing*

Friday: Numbers 6.22-27 *The priestly blessing*

Saturday: Revelation 14.12-13 *Blessed are those who die in the Lord*

Pray · That we might begin Advent with our own "I will" and be open to experiencing God's blessing
· For doubters, sceptics and unbelievers, that they might find faith

Prayer for Advent

Action: Make a generous donation to a Christmas charity so that others may experience blessing through you.



Advent Prayer Leaflet 2014

Coolangatta Q 4225

Dear Friends,

The importance of waiting is not a popular idea in this age of instant gratification. Why wait when we can have something now? And we can almost always have it now, because of the modern wonders of credit cards, hire purchase, bank loans and mortgages. Our determination to have something *now* can get us into all kinds of financial trouble. Sometimes, however, we have no choice but to wait. We have to wait for many things whether we want to or not: for a baby to be born or for life to pass, for news that will bring grief or relief, for an end to bad times over which we have no control. Sometimes we have to learn to wait and to value the important lessons waiting can teach us. Some things are worth waiting for.

Advent is a time of waiting. It is a season of darkness in which we wait for the light, a light whose growing brightness is represented by the candles in the Advent wreath. We are waiting to find joy. Advent focuses us on the good news of great joy for all people. This joy represents true happiness, rather than what our society often calls happiness. In finding this joy we will experience true blessing, the coming of Christ into our lives.

In this prayer leaflet I have borrowed from Joan Chittister's book *"The Liturgical Year"*, in which she reflects on the

seasons of the Church's year. She reminds us that the journey of Advent begins with Mary's "I will". *The great endeavor of the spiritual life, the great challenge to the faith, the great exertion of the soul, begins here, then, at the very moment when joy is greatest and the awareness of God with us is most palpable.* *

May this next step in our spiritual journeys begin with our own "I will" to God.

God bless. Sue

* The quotes in italics are from Joan Chittister, "The Liturgical Year: the spiraling adventure of the spiritual life", Thomas Nelson Inc., Nashville, 2009

Daily Prayer for Advent

God for whom we wait,
in this season of waiting teach us patience, trust and perseverance.
In this season of darkness help us to seek the light,
that we may be ready to hear afresh the good news of great joy.
In this season of expectation may we experience anew the blessing of Christ as we welcome him into our hearts and lives. **Amen.**

our midst

Friday: Romans 15.9b-13 *Rejoicing in the Gospel*

Saturday: Philippians 4.4-7 *Rejoice in the Lord always*

Pray · That in times of unhappiness and despair we may find the true joy that is God's will for us
· For all who seek to find happiness and fulfillment in the wrong places, that they might learn to seek first God's Kingdom

Prayer for Advent

Action: In the last busy weeks before Christmas, try to foster an attitude of joy, prayer and thanksgiving in preparation for the Lord's presence among us.

Week 4 : EXPERIENCING BLESSING

The fourth Sunday of Advent this year falls on the Feast of St Thomas. On this day we are reminded of Joseph's own doubts about Mary's pregnancy, about Mary's struggle to understand how the impossible might be, after all, possible with God, and about Elizabeth's faith in the unpredictable will of God.



In Thomas' desire to see with his own eyes before he would believe, we see our own doubts expressed about the promise of blessing, a blessing that often comes to us in ways we could never imagine, in which darkness is overcome by the light, human hatreds and violence are conquered by God's steadfast love and forgiveness, and death gives way to eternal life. Thomas came to believe and to declare that Jesus was "my Lord and my God" and in that recognition he experienced blessing, the same blessing that is available to all who have not seen and yet have also come to believe.

Week 3 : FINDING JOY

The third week of Advent, Gaudete Sunday, is the week to rejoice because the Lord is near. Joan Chittister writes, *An old adage teaches, "Joy is not in things; it is in us." Learning what it is that makes us happy is the task of a lifetime.* During Advent we are preparing to find joy. But where will this joy be found?

Joy is not the same thing as happiness. Happiness is dependent on circumstances, but there are reasons to rejoice even when we're not happy. The Scriptures urge us to "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." (1 Thessalonians 5.16-18) But how is one to rejoice and give thanks in circumstances where we feel there is little to be glad or grateful about? Again, as in the darkness we focus on the light, so now we focus not on our circumstances but on God, who can defy all circumstances, and is the place where true joy is to be found. Psalm 97.11 connects light and joy in this way: "Light dawns for the righteous, and joy for the upright in heart." *If, focused on the Christ Child at the very beginning of the liturgical year, we do not have the spiritual vision to see meaning there and to develop it within ourselves, there is nothing else on earth that will ever be able to supply it for us.* What is the star you are following, and will it lead you to find true joy?

Sunday: Matthew 2.7-12 *The Magi seek the light and find joy*

Monday: Luke 2.8-14 *The angels announce good news of great joy*

Tuesday: 1 Chronicles 16.10 *Seek the Lord and rejoice*

Wednesday: Psalm 98.4-9 *Rejoicing at the coming of the Lord*

Thursday: Isaiah 12.2-6 *Shout and sing for joy, for God is in*



Week 1 : LEARNING TO WAIT

Children hate to wait. They want to have everything 'right now'. To have to wait for something encourages us to be patient, helps us to control our desires, re-arranges our priorities. There are valuable lessons here for everyone. But how often do we take advantage of the opportunities that waiting affords us? As we begin to prepare for Christmas there will be many times when we will have to wait. In crowded shopping centres and among busy traffic we will find ourselves waiting in queues to be served as we do our Christmas shopping, and we will be caught in traffic jams in car parks and on the roads. Will we be overcome by our usual impatience, or can we take time to reflect in this enforced time of waiting and inactivity?

During Advent we are learning to wait. Joan Chittister writes *"Waiting is not having to know exactly what is coming tomorrow. We learn in Advent to stay in the present.... Advent teaches us to wait for what is beyond the obvious. It trains us to see what is behind the apparent. It makes us look for God in all those places we have, until now, ignored."*

There is much waiting on God in the Scriptures. Can we learn from the patience, insights and example of others, whose times of waiting have been times of revelation? *The function of Advent is to remind us what we're waiting for as we go through life too busy with things that do not matter to remember the things that do.*

Sunday: Advent 1 Luke 12.35-40 *We must wait expectantly and actively, not passively*

Monday: Mark 15.43-46 *Joseph of Arimathea is also waiting expectantly, though hope now seems lost*



Tuesday: Romans 8.18-25 *The creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the children of God*

Wednesday: Titus 2.11-14 *The lives we live while we wait*

Thursday: 2 Peter 3.8-13 *Waiting for the Lord's coming*

Friday: Psalm 13 *How long, O Lord?*

Saturday: Psalm 25.1-5 *Teach me and lead me as I wait*

Pray · That we might learn to wait on God with patience and trust

- That our days of waiting may be times of insight into God's ways

Prayer for Advent

Action: Use times when you are caught in queues and traffic jams to focus on God and reflect on the present moment.

Week 2 : SEEKING THE LIGHT

As the days grow gradually lighter with the change from winter to spring to summer, so the Advent wreath symbolises the increasing light of the Advent season. The final candle to be lit on Christmas Eve is the Christ candle, as the darkness of the world is dispelled by the Light of the World.

The theme of light and darkness is used symbolically many times in the New Testament, particularly in the Gospel of John. The light represents the things of God and the darkness represents opposition to the things of God. God's people are called to seek the light, to walk in the light, to prefer the light to the darkness and to believe in the light. By doing so we will be enabled to find the right way and to know the truth. Then, when the darkness descends, in whatever form that darkness takes, the light of God will lead us onward and through. Advent focuses us on the approaching light, helping us to review the direction our feet are taking and, if necessary, to

redirect our paths.

It is surprising how much dust and grime I can see in my house when I put on my glasses and look closely. Sometimes we would rather not see clearly and live in blissful ignorance. But that is not the way of God. God calls us to perfection, that is, the complete fulfilment of God's purposes for us. And so seeking the light of Advent must be accompanied by a willingness to change. If the first week of Advent calls us to wait, then the second week calls us to repent, to put our houses in order, so that we may be ready when the waiting is over.

Sunday: Isaiah 42.5-9 *God's servant is a light to the nations*

Monday: Matthew 4.12-17 *The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light*

Tuesday: John 3.19-21 *Light has come into the world, but will people prefer the darkness?*

Wednesday: John 9.1-7 *Jesus is the Light of the World, giving physical and spiritual sight*

Thursday: John 12.31-36 *Walking in the light*

Friday: Romans 13.11-14 *The night is gone, the day is near: living in the light*

Saturday: 1 John 1.5-10 *God is light: repentance brings us into fellowship with God and into the light*

Pray · Lord, help us to see with the eyes of faith

- For all who live in the shadow of darkness, that your light may shine to bring them hope

Prayer for Advent

Action: God's people are called to be a light to the nations. Light a candle in your home as a symbol of God's light. Bring some light into someone's life by an act of kindness or generosity.

