

St Bride's Parish • West Kilbride



O COME, O COME EMMANUEL!
Reflections • Prayers • Scripture • Readings for Advent 2020

Dear Parishioners,

St Bride's has a beautiful tradition of organising a Retreat in Advent or Lent to recharge our batteries before the celebration of the great moments of our salvation story. The global Pandemic has brought so much to a halt in Parish life, however, with this "hand-knitted" booklet, we have an opportunity from home or in Church to make this Advent a time of prayer and of drawing closer to the Lord and to each other.

What does our Advent usually look like? Busy? Hectic? Noisy? Of course it does. This is the story for so many of us come December. With all the busyness leading up to Christmas, all too often we miss out on Advent. We find ourselves on December 26th no different than we were on December 24th. Christmas came, Christ came ... and that amazing reality that changed the world didn't change us. But what if this coming Advent could be different? What if instead of losing track of Advent, we walked through it, day by day together as a Parish Family? Instead of Christmas being a day on our calendar, suddenly it would be something completely different. Advent would no longer be a time when we weren't exactly sure what to do, but rather would be a time of joyful anticipation of the coming of a child... a person... of the Lord. This Advent, I invite you to join our Parish Community as we journey through Advent with this simple Booklet of our reflections, thoughts and prayers. We can experience an Advent that is more peaceful, more joyful, and more meaningful than ever before, allowing the Holy Spirit to speak through us.

I would like to sincerely thank the Parishioners who made this Advent Booklet possible and sent in their contributions: A "massive thank you" to: **James Montgomery, Peter McCluskey, Paul McNulty, Phyllis Howie, David McSorley, Laura McLean, David Graham, Malcolm and Ellen Milne, Jo Gibson, Haylie Welsh, Pat and John McCabe, Betty Orr, Joe McAleavy and Jacquie Soutar.**

I hope you enjoy using this Booklet to inspire your prayer during the days of Advent. May the Good Lord bless every home in our Parish with his peace, joy and protection. *St Bride, our Patron, pray for us this Advent!*

Father Duncan





Sunday 29th November - 1st SUNDAY of ADVENT [B]

Mark 13:33-37 - “**Stay awake**”

Today we start to get ready to celebrate the coming of the Son of God as a human being. We need the help of Jesus now in dealing with the issues that affect our lives and to be ready to meet Him when he comes to call us. We “stay awake” by being aware that God is an active presence in our lives and by living lives of loving support for our neighbours both here at home and around the world.

“Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him” (*Psalms 37:7*).

Monday, 30th November - Solemnity of St Andrew

Matthew 4:18-22 - “**Follow me and I will make you fishers of men.**”

Why did they answer His call and follow Jesus? He preached and lived a new way of understanding the realities of the world. These fishermen could relate to His message that real freedom lies in serving Him, doing all the ordinary things in life well and trusting in the Father. We too are called to proclaim the Gospel, to joyfully share our faith with those around us as “fishers of men”.

“I ask you to be revolutionaries, to swim against the tide.” (*Pope Francis*)

Tuesday 1st December - First Week of Advent

Luke 10:21 - **“Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit.”**

Jesus experienced the joy that was the unconditional love of the Father - by the power of the Holy Spirit. Such a gift is ours if we but trust as children do their parents. And yet, paradoxically, we are called to an adult faith relationship, not through strength or brains, but experientially through childlike trust.

My Lord and Saviour, you are always with me, may I always permit myself to be held in your love that I might know the joy that is the Holy Spirit. Amen.



Wednesday, 2nd December - First Week of Advent

Matthew 15:32 - **“I feel sorry for all these people”**

The people who came to Jesus were broken people - people like me. And yet, they are healed and nourished in a seemingly impossible situation. How easily do I give up in seemingly impossible situations? How easily do I forget my God loves me? Lord, you alone can heal me. Help me to turn to listen to your life-giving Word; to receive you in "Holy Communion"; to be healed in my brokenness that I might feel the peace it brings.

Thursday 3rd December - Memorial of St Francis Xavier

Matthew 7:21,24-27 - **“The wise man built his house on a rock “**

Lord, help me not to get bogged down in the negative and evil that exists in our world. If I am in despair, let me look to the hope and new life of the Nativity. Your words are clear. Do not be afraid. You are always by my side. Carry me through and help me to pass on your strength to my friends and family in their moments of darkness.



Friday, 4th December - First Week of Advent

Matthew 9:27-31 - **“Your faith deserves it, so let this be done for you.”**

“To live by faith means to put our lives in the hands of God, especially, in our most difficult moments.” *(Pope Francis).*

Saturday 5th December - Our Lady's Day for Advent

Matthew 9:35-10:1, 5,6 -8 - **“The Harvest is rich but the labourers are few”**

This message tells me that almost 2000 years later, the world we now live in, at this time, brings us the same message. Look after the sick, the lonely, the vulnerable, offer hope and do it for love and not for reward.

“Advent increases our hope. A hope that does not disappoint. The Lord never lets us down.” *(Pope Francis)*



Sunday, 6th December - 2nd SUNDAY of ADVENT [B]

Mark 1:1-8 - **“A voice cries in the wilderness: prepare a way for the Lord!”**

With so much time on our hands now, let us be inspired to make this Advent a truly great time to reflect and prepare for the most important day of the year.

“It is the beautiful task of Advent to awaken in all of us memories of goodness and thus to open doors of hope.” *(Pope Benedict XVI)*

Monday 7th December - Memorial of St Ambrose

Luke 5:17-26 - **“Your sins are forgiven you: get up and walk.”**

“Who is this man talking blasphemy, who can forgive sins but God alone?” Our Christian wisdom is to name the darkness as darkness and the Light as light, and to learn how to live and work in the Light so that the darkness does not overcome us. If we have a ‘pie in the sky, everything-is-beautiful’ attitude, we are in fact going to be trapped by the darkness because we are not seeing clearly. Mother Teresa says. “Lord increase my faith, bless my efforts and work, now and for evermore. Amen”

Reflection

In what parts of your life are you trying to push away darkness instead of living with it as a teacher and transformer?



Tuesday, 8th December - Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Luke 1:26-38 - **“I am the handmaid of the Lord”, said Mary. “Let what you have said be done to me.”**

The angel said to her, “Mary, do not be afraid; you have won God’s favour.” Advent is a time to focus our expectation and anticipation on ‘the adult Christ, the Cosmic Christ’ who challenges us to empty ourselves, to lose ourselves, to surrender. This has perhaps never been more so than this year.

Reflection

Who do you know who has been rejected from your community and who you can reintroduce and thus heal?

Wednesday 9th December - Memorial of St Juan Diego

Matthew 11:28-30 - **“My yoke is easy and my burden light.”**

Jesus said, ‘Come to me, all you who labour and are overburdened, and I will give you rest. Shoulder my yoke and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. Yes, my yoke is easy and my burden light.’

Reflection on words of *St. Theresa of Avila*. “Let nothing trouble you; Let nothing frighten you. Everything passes away. Everything passes away: God never changes. Patience obtains all. Whoever has God wants for nothing: Whoever has God has enough. Whoever has God wants for nothing: They have all they need to live their life. For God alone will suffice.”



Thursday, 10th December - Second Week of Advent

Matthew 11:11-15 - **“A greater than John the Baptist has never been seen.”**

Jesus spoke to the crowds: ‘I tell you solemnly, of all the children born of women, a greater than John the Baptist has never been seen; yet the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he is. Since John the Baptist came, up to this present time, the kingdom of heaven has been subjected to violence and the violent are taking it by storm. Because it was towards John that all the prophecies of the prophets and of the Law were leading; and he, if you will believe me, is the Elijah who was to return. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen!’

“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.” (*Teilhard de Chardin*)

Friday 11th December - Second Week of Advent

Matthew 11:16-19 - **“They heed neither John nor the Son of Man. What description can I find for this generation?”**

What description can I find for ALL generations? Creatures of habit yet fickle minded? Natural ‘judges’ yet often lacking the wisdom with which to judge?

Prayer For Today

Dear Lord, help me, to understand your ways through wisdom, maturity, innocence and compassion, so that I might grow more like you each day. Help me, during this time of hope, preparation and earthly uncertainty, to hear your word and follow your pathway to peace and joy. Help me, to remove my shield of human illusion and replace it with the reality of your divine love. Amen



Saturday, 12th December - Memorial of Our Lady of Guadalupe

Matthew 17:10-13 - **“Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him.”**

How often do we see what we want to see? How often do we adjust what we see to make it more to our liking? How often do we fail to recognise what's in front of us? How often do we reject/delete/trash what we don't understand?

Prayer For Today

Dear Lord, forgive our reluctance to recognise you in our daily lives. Help us to change our existence from one of superficial compliance to one of supernatural inquisitiveness. Help us to recognise Christ in the Eucharist and save us in mind and body for eternal rest. Forgive our foolish ways Lord, open our minds and hearts to see things as they really are and not as we would have them to be. Forgive us our lack of courage and of mindfulness. Help us with the Holy Spirit, to face the challenges of your message, with humility and love. Amen



Sunday 13th December - 3rd SUNDAY of ADVENT [B]

Phil 4:4-5 - **“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say, rejoice. Indeed the Lord is near.”**

Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11 - **“He has sent me to proclaim a year of favour from the Lord. For as the earth makes fresh things grow, as a garden makes seeds spring up, so will the Lord make both integrity and praise spring up in the sight of the nations.”**

Reflection

Father, help us, as your global people, hear your voice as we reflect on the challenges of 2020, and the impact of COVID-19 on our families, our communities, our public services, society and governments. Help us see what you see. Help us see the seeds spring up, and help us nurture these to bring unity and fairness within and among nations.



Monday, 14th December - Memorial of St John of the Cross

Gospel Acclamation - **‘Alleluia, alleluia! The Lord will come, go out to meet him.’**

Reflection

As we prepare for the infant birth, we think about making ready our hearts and our homes for the coming of Jesus. But Jesus waits at the door of our hearts, He waits to be invited in. Close your eyes and imagine physically opening your door, and stepping out to meet Jesus. Let us open our hearts and go out to meet Jesus everyday.

As we celebrate the feast of St John of the Cross, we thank God for our holy men and women, and for all who have gone out to care for others throughout the challenges of 2020.

Tuesday 15th December - Third Week of Advent

Matthew 21:28-32 - **Jesus said to them, “I tell you solemnly, the tax collectors and prostitutes are making their way into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you, a pattern of true righteousness, but you did not believe him, and yet the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.”**

Reflection

“The Gospel passage calls into question the way of living a Christian life, which is not made up of dreams and beautiful aspirations, but of concrete commitments, in order to open ourselves ever more to God’s will and to love for our brothers and sisters. But this, even the smallest concrete commitment, cannot be made without grace. Conversion is a grace we must always ask for: “Lord, give me the grace to improve. Give me the grace to be a good Christian”. *(Pope Francis reflection on the parable of the two sons, 27 September 2020)*



Wednesday, 16th December - Third Week of Advent

Luke 7:19-25 - **“John summoning two of his disciples, sent them to the Lord to ask, “Are you the one who is to come, or must we wait for someone else?” When the men reached Jesus, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you to ask, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or have we to wait for someone else?’” It was just then that he cured many people of diseases and afflictions and of evil spirits; and gave the gift of sight to many who were blind. Then he gave the messengers their answer, “Go back and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind see again, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear and the dead are raised to life, the good news is proclaimed to the poor and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.”**

Reflection

In this passage, we see one of the greatest men in Biblical history experience a moment of doubt. But what is more encouraging still is to see how Jesus responds. Jesus doesn’t berate him. Jesus doesn’t belittle him. Jesus doesn’t rebuke or reprimand him. Jesus just loves him, and gives the man what he needs to overcome his doubt. The man who experiences this period of doubt is none other than John the Baptist. He is the greatest Old Testament prophet. Jesus says of him that of those born of women from creation up till that time, none were greater than John the Baptist.

Thursday 17th December - O Wisdom of the Word

Psalm 71(72) - **“May the mountains bring forth peace for the people and the hills justice. May he defend the poor of the people and save the children of the needy. In his days justice shall flourish and peace till the moon fails. He shall rule from sea to sea, from the Great River to earth’s bounds.”**

Reflection

A key message of Advent is that God sent his son to come among us and be with us - our Emmanuel. Pope Francis suggests that, as a result of the pandemic, the world needs to change perspective away from selfishness in order to be centred on social justice and caring for others. This is shown through the example set by Jesus. Advent is a time to reflect on God’s goodness which is demonstrated by the many people today who care for those in need. We give thanks for all who show the gifts of compassion and selflessness.



Friday, 18th December - O Sacred Lord

Matthew 1: 20-24 - **“..the angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream and said ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because she has conceived what is in her by the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son and you must name him Jesus, because he is the one who is to save his people from their sins.’ Now all this took place to fulfil the words spoken by the Lord through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means ‘God-is-with-us.’ When Joseph woke up he did what the angel of the Lord had told him to do: he took his wife to his home.”**

Reflection

Not only Mary but also Joseph received God’s message and accepted his will unconditionally. During Advent, we ask for the grace that we listen to, hear and accept God’s will with faith and trust that he always has a plan and wants only what is best for us. ‘Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, whatever Jesus sends us. It consists in accepting and following the will of God.’ - (*Mother Teresa of Calcutta*)

Saturday 19th December - O Root of Jesse

Luke 1:5-25 - **“You will conceive and bare a son.”**

Then there appeared to Zechariah the angel of the Lord, standing on the right of the altar of incense. The sight disturbed Zechariah and he was overcome with fear. But the angel said to him, “Zechariah do not be afraid, your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth is to bear you a son and you must name him John. He will be your joy and delight and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of The Lord.”

Reflection

Lord, how can we be sure when you speak to us, help us to discern what is of God. Help us to be patient when waiting for your words to come true at the appointed time, trusting in you always and in thanksgiving for your graces and blessings. Like Elizabeth we proclaim “The Lord has done this for me”



Sunday, 20th December - 4th SUNDAY of ADVENT [B]

Luke 1:26-38 - **“I am the Handmaid of the Lord.”**

Rejoice so highly favoured. The Lord is with you. She was deeply disturbed by these words and asked herself what this greeting could mean, but the Angel said to her: “Mary do not be afraid, you have won God’s favour. LISTEN!”

Reflection

Lord help us to believe that you have chosen us to do your will. Me your unworthy servant, me who like Mary is not worthy and sometimes afraid. Help us us understand that we too, every one of us has won God’s favour and help us at all times to LISTEN to what God is saying. “I will sing forever of your love, O Lord.”

Monday 21st December - O Radiant Dawn

Luke 1:39-45 - **“Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord?”**

“Mary set out and went as quickly as she could to a town in the hill country of Judah. She went into Zechariah’s house and greeted Elizabeth. Now as soon as Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the child leapt in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She gave a loud cry and said, ‘Of all women, you are the most blessed, and blessed is the fruit of your womb. Why should I be honoured with a visit from the mother of my Lord ? For the moment your greeting reached my ears, the child in my womb leapt for joy. Yes, blessed is she who believed that the promise made to her by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

“The child leaped for joy.” In Luke’s Gospel, joy emerges wherever Jesus is. Octavius Winslow, a 19th evangelical preacher wrote “The religion of Christ is the religion of Joy”. Considering the solely biological side of this passage from Luke’s Gospel, neither Mary or Elizabeth should be pregnant. Elizabeth was too old and Mary was a virgin. Mary accepted the Will of God to give birth to Jesus our Saviour. Elizabeth gave birth to a son who would become John the Baptist. There is the sense of contentment, acceptance and joy for both Mary and Elizabeth. So too are we called (as we are always called) to commit to a new spiritual awareness and to extend our spiritual belief in Jesus with joy. In order to achieve this, it is important that we believe and trust the Holy Spirit for inner guidance as we continue our journey and growth in faith.



Tuesday, 22nd December - O King of all the Nations

Luke 1:46-56 - **“The Almighty has done great things for me.”**

In the Magnificat Mary said: “My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord And my spirit exults in God my saviour; Because he has looked upon his lowly handmaid. Yes, from this day forward all generations will call me blessed, For the Almighty has done great things for me. Holy is his name .

Reflection

Mary is full of praise and using the first person: ”my soul.....my spirit, my Saviour, will call me blessed.....has done great things for me.” The soul of the prayer is therefore the celebration of Divine Grace that has come into Mary’s heart and life. Mary’s grateful heart overflows with thanksgiving. God is the great one in her life, working marvels beyond all imagining.

Continued: Mary's testimony is not solitary and private. As the Virgin Mary is conscious that she has a mission to fulfil for humanity and that her life is framed in the history of salvation, thus she can say: "His mercy reaches from age to age to those who fear him (verse 50). With this praise to the Lord , Mary gives voice to all to find the mercy of God .

The Magnificat also scatters the proud, pulls down the mighty, and dismisses the rich. In their place Jesus exalts the unimportant ones and feeds the starving - he is on the side of the lowly ones . The Magnificat therefore also reminds us that we are all called to salvation and the coming of our Jesus our Saviour is very near .

We too should be happy and joyful for Jesus 'salvation is also ours and is near'. Pope Francis says we should pray insistently for that joy in our hearts.



Wednesday 23rd December - O Emmanuel

Malachi 3:1-4,23-24 - **"Before my day comes, I will send you Elijah my prophet. He will take his seat as refiner and purifier, he will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, and they will make the offering to the Lord as it should be."**

Reflection

As we prepare to honour the birth of Christ and all that it represents, are we bringing our best selves to the celebration? "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law ". (*Galatians 5: 22-23*)

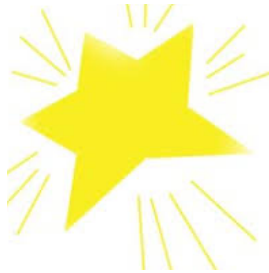


Thursday, 24th December - Christmas Eve 2020

Luke 1:67-79 - “You, little child shall be the prophet of the Most High - for you will go before the Lord to prepare the way for him, to give his people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins; this by the tender mercy of our God who from on high will bring the rising Sun to visit us.”

Reflection

the fruit of faith is love,
the fruit of love is service,
the fruit of service is peace. *(Mother Teresa)*



*Friday 25th December - THE NATIVITY of the LORD
Christmas Day 2020*



Christmas celebrated without Christ is an “empty holiday”. What sense does it make to celebrate Christmas if we don’t tell the world that God has become man to set us free? The Child, adored over 2000 years ago by the shepherds and Wise Men in the stable of Bethlehem, never stops visiting us in our daily lives. He to be born again in our homes and in our hearts. May everyone feel the warmth of this Christmas Miracle, and may that warmth spread out through every day of

the coming year. May Christmas be a celebration of peace and salvation - joy for the birth of the Saviour, the Prince of Peace. **Come and celebrate with us!**