

Diocese of Cork and Ross

Waiting in Hope: Listening for God's Promise Through the Word (Year A)

1st Week of Advent



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Waiting in Hope – What is Advent?

Advent is the four-week season that begins the Church's liturgical year. It is a time of waiting in hope not passive waiting, but a hopeful attentiveness to God's promises. Through the Scriptures, God speaks His promises again and again, and Advent trains our hearts to listen. This season invites us to slow down, to watch for the subtle ways God is already at work, and to hold His promises close, trusting that He always fulfils what He speaks.

The Three Comings of Jesus

Advent is more than a countdown to Christmas. It is a season that opens our hearts to the three ways Jesus comes into our lives in history, in mystery, and in majesty. Each coming reveals something essential about who God is and how He loves us.

1. The first coming of Jesus in History – The Incarnation

Over two thousand years ago, in the quiet town of Bethlehem, God fulfilled His ancient promises by becoming one of us. In Jesus, the eternal Word took on flesh not as a distant ruler, but as a vulnerable child. This first coming reveals:

- **God's closeness:** He steps into our human condition with tenderness and humility.
- **God's faithfulness:** Every prophecy, every longing of Israel finds its "yes" in Jesus.
- **God's love:** He becomes Emmanuel, God-with-us, to rescue, heal, and restore.

During Advent, we remember this great miracle and allow its truth to reshape our trust: **God keeps His promises.**

2. Jesus comes to us now through grace

Jesus did not simply come once and disappear. He continues to come to us daily in countless ways, often quietly and unexpectedly. He comes now:

- In the **Scriptures** — when a word touches our heart or opens our eyes.
- In the **Sacraments** — especially the Eucharist, where He feeds and strengthens us.
- In the **poor and the vulnerable** — where His face shines in those who need mercy.
- In the **community of believers** — in friendship, forgiveness, and shared faith.
- In **prayer** — in silence, inspiration, longing, and consolation.

This second coming invites us to attentiveness.

Advent teaches us to slow down and recognise Christ's presence breaking into the ordinary moments of our lives — to cultivate a heart that listens for His voice and notices His grace.

3. Jesus will come in glory at the end of time

The Creed reminds us: “He will come again in glory.” This is not meant to frighten us but to fill us with hope. At the end of time, Jesus will:

- **Set all things right** — every injustice, every wound, every sorrow healed.
- **Gather all people to Himself** — revealing the full beauty of God's plan.
- **Renew creation** — a world made whole, radiant with divine love.

This final coming anchors our hope. It reminds us that history is moving toward a promise, not chaos; toward fulfilment, not fear.

Advent: Awake, Hopeful, Ready

When we hold all three comings together, Advent becomes a season of:

- **Remembering God's faithfulness** in the past,
- **Recognising His presence** in the present, and
- **Rejoicing in the hope** of His future glory.

To live Advent well is to say: Jesus, be with me in where I've been, where I am, and where I'm going.

What is *Lectio Divina*?

Lectio divina ("divine reading") is an ancient way of praying with Scripture. In Advent, it helps us listen to God's promises and recognise how Jesus comes to us each day.

Five movements guide this prayer:

1. **Read:** Read the Gospel slowly. Notice what word or phrase touches your heart.
2. **Reflect:** Ponder what God might be saying to you.
3. **Respond:** Speak to God from the heart.
4. **Rest:** Rest silently in God's presence.
5. **Radiate:** Living the Scripture by shining Christ's love in daily life.



Week 1 of Advent

Waiting in Hope: Listening for God's promise to awaken our hearts

1st Sunday of Advent - Matthew 24:37-44

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'As it was in Noah's day, so will it be when the Son of Man comes. For in those days before the Flood people were eating, drinking, taking wives, taking husbands, right up to the day Noah went into the ark, and they suspected nothing till the Flood came and swept all away. It will be like this when the Son of Man comes. Then of two men in the fields one is taken, one left; of two women at the millstone grinding, one is taken, one left.

'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect.'

(Matthew 24:37-44)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- What distracts your heart from God's presence?
- Where is Jesus inviting you to wakefulness?
- What does readiness look like for you today?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Practice a "Sacred Pause" during the day.

Choose one moment in your day, for example, before opening your phone, starting a meal, or walking into a room, to pause for 10 seconds. In that pause, pray quietly: "Jesus, help me notice Your presence right now." This habit trains the heart to stay awake and to recognise Christ in the ordinary moments where He is already present.

Do one hidden act of love

Choose one unannounced, uncredited act of kindness today, something no one will notice but God. For example:

- Pray silently for someone who frustrates you.
- Send an anonymous note of encouragement.
- Offer a small sacrifice for someone who is struggling.

This step puts your heart into a posture of readiness: available, generous, and alert to God's quiet invitations.

Monday of the 1st Week of Advent - Matthew 8:5-11

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

When Jesus went into Capernaum a centurion came up and pleaded with him. 'Sir,' he said 'my servant is lying at home paralysed, and in great pain.' 'I will come myself and cure him' said Jesus. The centurion replied, 'Sir, I am not worthy to have you under my roof; just give the word and my servant will be cured. For I am under authority myself, and have soldiers under me; and I say to one man: Go, and he goes; to another: Come here, and he comes; to my servant: Do this, and he does it.' When Jesus heard this he was astonished and said to those following him, 'I tell you solemnly, nowhere in Israel have I found faith like this. And I tell you that many will come from east and west to take their places with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob at the feast in the kingdom of heaven.' (Matthew 8:5-11)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- What area of your life needs Christ's healing touch today?
- Where do you struggle to trust Jesus' authority or timing?
- What does the centurion teach you about humility in prayer?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Entrust one specific situation to Jesus' care

Choose one area of your life where you feel anxious, powerless, or unsure (e.g., a relationship, a decision, a health worry, work stress).

Pray slowly: "Lord, I am not worthy... but I trust You with this." Then let Jesus hold it without taking it back every hour. This mirrors the centurion's confident trust in Jesus' word.

Speak a healing word to someone else

The centurion interceded for someone who needed healing. Do the same by offering a small act of care:

- Send a message to someone who is struggling.
- Pray intentionally for someone who needs healing.
- Do a quiet act of compassion for someone who's burdened.

This is living the Gospel outwardly by letting Christ's mercy reach another person through you.

Tuesday of the 1st Week of Advent - Luke 10:21-24

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, Jesus said: 'I bless you, Father, Lord of heaven and of earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children. Yes, Father, for that is what it pleased you to do. Everything has been entrusted to me by my Father; and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.' Then turning to his disciples he spoke to them in private, 'Happy the eyes that see what you see, for I tell you that many prophets and kings wanted to see what you see, and never saw it; to hear what you hear, and never heard it.' (Luke 10:21-24)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- Where do you notice pride blocking God's voice?
- What simple grace can you thank God for today?
- How might humility open you to joy?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Practice a moment of childlike gratitude

Take one minute today to notice something small but good, for example, sunlight, a kind word, warmth, laughter, silence, or beauty. Then pray: “Father, I thank You for this.” This simple act reflects the childlike openness Jesus praises, and helps you see God’s presence in ordinary moments.

Honour someone who is often overlooked

Jesus rejoices that God reveals Himself to the “little ones.” Do one concrete act of kindness toward someone who is easily unseen:

- thank a service worker, e.g., a cleaner, server, or bus driver,
- check in with someone lonely,
- listen patiently to someone who needs to talk,
- offer sincere attention to someone in your home or workplace.

This honours the hidden presence of God in the humble and unnoticed, just as Jesus does in this Gospel.

Wednesday of the 1st Week of Advent - Matthew 15:29-37

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

Jesus reached the shores of the Sea of Galilee, and he went up into the hills. He sat there, and large crowds came to him bringing the lame, the crippled, the blind, the dumb and many others; these they put down at his feet, and he cured them. The crowds were astonished to see the dumb speaking, the cripples whole again, the lame walking and the blind with their sight, and they praised the God of Israel. But Jesus called his disciples to him and said, 'I feel sorry for all these people; they have been with me for three days now and have nothing to eat. I do not want to send them off hungry, they might collapse on the way.' The disciples said to him, 'Where could we get enough bread in this deserted place to feed such a crowd?' Jesus said to them, 'How many loaves have you?' 'Seven' they said 'and a few small fish.' Then he instructed the crowd to sit down on the ground, and he took the seven loaves and the fish, and he gave thanks and broke them and handed them to the disciples, who gave them to the crowds. They all ate as much as they wanted, and they collected what was left of the scraps, seven baskets full. (Matthew 15:29-37)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- What hunger is in your heart today?
- Where do you need God's compassion?
- How might God be calling you to feed others spiritually?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Bring your own need to Jesus honestly

Take a quiet moment and ask yourself: "What hunger is in my heart right now?" (peace, meaning, rest, clarity, belonging, strength...) Then pray: "Jesus, I give You this hunger. Feed me as only You can." Trust that Jesus sees your needs before you even speak them, just as He saw the crowd.

Feed someone's hunger — physical or emotional

Identify someone in your life who is "hungry" in some way: someone tired, someone lonely, someone stressed, someone discouraged, or someone literally in need of food. Offer a small act to "feed" them: bring them a snack or coffee, listen without rushing, send an encouraging message, stop to talk with someone who feels left out, or donate food to someone in need. This mirrors Jesus' compassionate response to the crowd's hunger.

Saint of the Day

Today is the feast of St. Francis Xavier, who moved by Christ's compassion for the hungry crowds, carried the Gospel across continents to "feed" those longing for hope and truth. Like Jesus who would not send the people away empty, St. Francis Xavier poured out his life so that others might experience the abundance of God's love and mercy.

Thursday of the 1st Week of Advent - Matthew 7:21,24-27

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'It is not those who say to me, "Lord, Lord," who will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the person who does the will of my Father in heaven. Therefore, everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a sensible man who built his house on rock. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and hurled themselves against that house, and it did not fall: it was founded on rock. But everyone who listens to these words of mine and does not act on them will be like a stupid man who built his house on sand. Rain came down, floods rose, gales blew and struck that house, and it fell; and what a fall it had!' (Matthew 7:21,24-27)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- What foundations are strong in your life?
- Where do you feel shaky or overwhelmed?
- What practice helps you stay rooted in Christ?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Strengthen your “foundation” with a small spiritual habit

Take three minutes today to anchor yourself in Christ through a simple practice:

- pray a short Psalm,
- read a few verses of Scripture again,
- sit quietly with God,
- or repeat a truth like, “Lord, You are my rock.”

This stabilises your heart so that when “storms” come, you’re grounded in Him, not in emotion or circumstance.

Put one teaching of Jesus into action today

Choose one clear Gospel teaching, for example, forgiveness, patience, honesty, mercy, blessing your enemies, or caring for the poor, and practice it once today in a deliberate, concrete way.

This moves you from hearing Jesus’ words to building with them.

Saint of the Day

Today is also the feast of St. John Damascene who spent his life building on the solid rock of Christ by defending true faith through prayer, clarity, and courageous teaching. Like the wise builder in the Gospel, he reminds us that a strong foundation is formed not by words alone, but by living the truth we profess with conviction and love.

Friday of the 1st Week of Advent - Matthew 9:27-31

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

As Jesus went on his way two blind men followed him shouting, 'Take pity on us, Son of David.' And when Jesus reached the house the blind men came up with him and he said to them, 'Do you believe I can do this?' They said, 'Sir, we do.' Then he touched their eyes saying, 'Your faith deserves it, so let this be done for you.' And their sight returned. Then Jesus sternly warned them, 'Take care that no one learns about this.' But when they had gone, they talked about him all over the countryside. (Matthew 9:27-31)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- What cry of your heart echoes the blind men's plea?
- What does Jesus' question "Do you believe?" stir in you?
- Where do you need persistence in prayer?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Ask Jesus boldly for one thing you need today.

Choose one area of your life where you need light, healing, clarity, or help. Pray with the same courage as the blind men: “Jesus, have mercy on me. I trust You. Help me with this.” This is a way of opening your heart and allowing Jesus to act.

Encourage someone else to trust God with their struggle

Reach out to a friend, family member, or coworker who is weighed down. Offer a message, prayer, or simple reminder of God’s care, something like: “I’m praying for you. Jesus is with you in this.” Just as Jesus restored sight, you can shine a small light into someone’s darkness today

Saturday of the 1st Week of Advent - Matthew 9:35-10:1,5,6-8

1. Read: What does the passage say?

Read the Gospel slowly. Circle words or phrases that stay with you.

Jesus made a tour through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the Good News of the kingdom and curing all kinds of diseases and sickness. And when he saw the crowds he felt sorry for them because they were harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, 'The harvest is rich but the labourers are few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send labourers to his harvest.' He summoned his twelve disciples, and gave them authority over unclean spirits with power to cast them out and to cure all kinds of diseases and sickness. These twelve Jesus sent out, instructing them as follows: 'Go rather to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. And as you go, proclaim that the kingdom of heaven is close at hand. Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out devils. You received without charge, give without charge.'

(Matthew 9:35-10:1,5,6-8)

2. Reflect: What is God saying to me?

Sit with what stood out. Let it speak to your heart. Is it encouraging? Challenging? Inviting? What is this telling me about who God is, who I am, and who the Church is? You might like to reflect on the following questions:

- Where do you feel invited to share God's compassion?
- What gift has God given you to offer others?
- Who needs encouragement from you today?

3. Respond: What do I want to say to God?

Talk honestly with God about what you're feeling or thinking. Prayer is a two-way conversation.

4. Rest: How is God inviting me to simply be?

Let go of thinking or speaking. Rest in God's presence for a few minutes and let him love you.

5. Radiate: How can I radiate the love of Jesus by living out this Word today?

Give freely in a way that costs you something

Jesus tells the disciples, "You received without charge; give without charge." Choose one way today to give freely: for example, offer your time, share a resource, donate quietly, forgive someone, volunteer briefly, or do an unnoticed kindness. This makes you a living sign of the Kingdom Jesus sends His disciples to proclaim.

Do one act of compassion for someone who is struggling

Look for someone today who is tired, stressed, lonely, or overwhelmed, and do something small but real to lift their spirit: for example, send an encouraging message, listen without rushing, offer help, or pray for them on the spot. This imitates Jesus' heart, who was moved with compassion for the people.

Saint of the Day

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Nicholas, bishop, who lived the compassion of Jesus by quietly caring for the poor, the vulnerable, and those weighed down by hidden burdens, embodying Christ's command to "give without charge." Like the disciples sent out by Jesus, St. Nicholas became a sign of God's tender mercy, bringing hope and healing through humble, generous acts of love.

Weekly Closing Reflection

As this first week ends, pause and notice where hope has begun to stir in you. What small signs of God's promise have you heard through His Word? Ask for the grace to stay awake and expectant as Christ draws near.



*In Advent, we hold on to hope,
trusting in God's promise
that light will overcome every shadow.*



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