

# Diocese of Cork and Ross

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

**3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent**



Table of Contents

Week 3 of Advent..... 3

3rd Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) – Matthew 11:2-11..... 3

Monday of the 3rd Week of Advent – Matthew 21:23-27..... 5

Tuesday of the 3rd Week of Advent – Matthew 21:28-32..... 7

Countdown to Christmas – The O Antiphons..... 9

Wednesday, December 17th – Matthew 1:1-17..... 10

Thursday, December 18th – Matthew 1:18-24..... 13

Friday, December 19th – Luke 1:5-25..... 15

Saturday, December 20th – Luke 1:26-38..... 18



## Week 3 of Advent

### Waiting in Hope: Listening for God's promise of joy breaking into our world

#### 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) – Matthew 11:2-11

##### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

John in his prison had heard what Christ was doing and he sent his disciples to ask him, 'Are you the one who is to come, or have we got to wait for someone else?' Jesus answered, 'Go back and tell John what you hear and see; the blind see again, and the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised to life and the Good News is proclaimed to the poor; and happy is the man who does not lose faith in me.' As the messengers were leaving, Jesus began to talk to the people about John: 'What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swaying in the breeze? No? Then what did you go out to see? A man wearing fine clothes? Oh no, those who wear fine clothes are to be found in palaces. Then what did you go out for? To see a prophet? Yes, I tell you, and much more than a prophet: he is the one of whom scripture says: 'Look, I am going to send my messenger before you; he will prepare your way before you. '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.'

(Matthew 11:2-11)

##### 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:

- Where do you long for good news in a place of uncertainty, discouragement, or waiting? Where you need Jesus to speak hope into your life?
- Whose faith encourages yours or reflects Christ's strength the way John the Baptist did?
- How can you receive Christ's encouragement 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?**

Look for and name one "sign of hope" God is giving you today.

John the Baptist longed for reassurance, and Jesus answered by pointing to the signs of God's work. Do the same: pause once today and intentionally name one sign of God's goodness e.g. a kindness, a moment of peace, an answered prayer, beauty in creation, or strength you didn't expect. Let this be Christ's encouragement to you.

Encourage someone who is discouraged or waiting

Send a message, make a call, or speak a kind word to someone who feels weighed down, uncertain, or forgotten. Even a simple, "I'm praying for you," or "I will light a candle for you," can carry the same spirit of reassurance Jesus offered to John.

## Monday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent – Matthew 21:23-27

### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

Jesus had gone into the Temple and was teaching, when the chief priests and the elders of the people came to him and said, 'What authority have you for acting like this? And who gave you this authority?' 'And I' replied Jesus 'will ask you a question, only one; if you tell me the answer to it, I will then tell you my authority for acting like this. John's baptism: where did it come from: heaven or man?' And they argued it out this way among themselves, 'If we say from heaven, he will retort, "Then why did you refuse to believe him?"; but if we say from man, we have the people to fear, for they all hold that John was a prophet.' So their reply to Jesus was, 'We do not know.' And he retorted, 'Nor will I tell you my authority for acting like this.'

(Matthew 21:23-27)

### 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:

- Where do you avoid honesty with God or yourself (perhaps in an area where you feel defensive, uncertain, or resistant to change)?
- What truth do you need to face today – maybe about a pattern in your behaviour, a relationship that needs healing, or a responsibility you've been postponing?
- How can honesty draw you closer to 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?**

Be honest with God about one area you've been avoiding

Choose one part of your life where you've been unsure, defensive, or reluctant to let God in, perhaps a habit, a relationship, a fear, or a decision. Speak honestly to Jesus about it in prayer, even if your words feel messy or unfinished. This counters the evasiveness of the leaders in the Gospel and opens space for God's guidance.

Take one small step of integrity in a situation today

Identify one place where you need to act with clarity or truth, e.g. admitting a mistake, keeping a promise, speaking truthfully, or following through on something you've delayed. This is a practical way to honour Jesus' authority in your daily life.

## Tuesday of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent – Matthew 21:28-32

### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

Jesus said to the chief priests and elders of the people, 'What is your opinion? A man had two sons. He went and said to the first, "My boy, you go and work in the vineyard today." He answered, "I will not go," but afterwards thought better of it and went. The man then went and said the same thing to the second who answered, "Certainly, sir," but did not go. Which of the two did the father's will?' 'The first' they said. Jesus said to them, 'I tell you solemnly, 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 prostitutes did. Even after seeing that, you refused to think better of it and believe in him.' (Matthew 21:28-32)

### 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:

- With which son do you identify?
- Where do your actions need alignment with your faith (perhaps in a relationship, a habit, a responsibility, or a commitment where your words and choices don't yet fully match)?
- What step of obedience is Jesus inviting you to take today, e.g. a simple act of love, repentance, honesty, or service that reflects a genuine 'yes' to God?

### 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 Jesus one small, honest “yes” in prayer today.

Take a quiet moment and ask Jesus: “Lord, what are You asking of me today?” Listen for even the smallest nudge, to pray, to slow down, to trust, to return to Him, and offer God a sincere yes, even if it feels small or imperfect. This builds a genuine, daily obedience from the heart, the kind Jesus praises in this Gospel.

Follow through on one good intention you’ve been delaying

Choose one thing you’ve been meaning to do, e.g. a message you need to send, an act of charity you’ve postponed, a task you’ve avoided, or an apology you’ve been putting off and do it today. This turns your good intentions into the kind of obedience Jesus praises.



## Countdown to Christmas – The O Antiphons

The **O Antiphons** are a set of seven ancient prayers the Church prays from December 17<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup>, in the final stretch toward Christmas. They're short, poetic, and powerful, and each one begins with the word "O", expressing a deep longing for God.

Every antiphon gives Jesus a different title drawn from the Old Testament – like **O Wisdom**, **O Key of David**, **O Emmanuel**. These aren't random names; they reveal the different ways Jesus comes into our lives. For example:

- as **Wisdom** when we're confused,
- as **Light** when we feel lost,
- as **King** when we need direction,
- as **Emmanuel** when we need to know God is with us.

Think of the O Antiphons as the Church's countdown to Christmas, a spiritual "advent calendar" of names for Jesus. They help us recognise our deepest hopes and remind us that Christ is the answer to them.

These prayers were written over 1,200 years ago, yet they speak into the struggles we face today: uncertainty, searching for purpose, longing for peace, and needing reassurance. The O Antiphons teach us that we don't have to solve those things alone. Jesus steps into each of them with a different gift.

Praying the O Antiphons is a simple way to prepare your heart for Christmas: one title, one prayer, one moment of hope each day.

## Wednesday, December 17<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 1:1-17

### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

A genealogy of Jesus Christ, son of David, son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers, Judah was the father of Perez and Zerah, Tamar being their mother, Perez was the father of Hezron, Hezron the father of Ram, Ram was the father of Amminadab, Amminadab the father of Nahshon, Nahshon the father of Salmon, Salmon was the father of Boaz, Rahab being his mother, Boaz was the father of Obed, Ruth being his mother, Obed was the father of Jesse; and Jesse was the father of King David. David was the father of Solomon, whose mother had been Uriah's wife, Solomon was the father of Rehoboam, Rehoboam the father of Abijah, Abijah the father of Asa, Asa was the father of Jehoshaphat, Jehoshaphat the father of Joram, Joram the father of Azariah, Azariah was the father of Jotham, Jotham the father of Ahaz, Ahaz the father of Hezekiah, Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, Manasseh the father of Amon, Amon the father of Josiah; and Josiah was the father of Jechoniah and his brothers. Then the deportation to Babylon took place. After the deportation to Babylon: Jechoniah was the father of Shealtiel, Shealtiel the father of Zerubbabel, Zerubbabel was the father of Abiud, Abiud the father of Eliakim, Eliakim the father of Azor, Azor was the father of Zadok, Zadok the father of Achim, Achim the father of Eliud, Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, Matthan the father of Jacob; and Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary; of her was born Jesus who is called Christ. The sum of generations is therefore: fourteen from Abraham to David; fourteen from David to the Babylonian deportation; and fourteen from the Babylonian deportation to Christ. (Matthew 1:1-17)

## 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:

- Jesus' family tree is filled with ordinary, flawed, and even broken people, yet God worked through every one of them. What part of my own story (my family, my past, my struggle) does God want to remind me He can work through, just as He worked through the imperfect people in Jesus' family line?
- Where do I need to trust that God is weaving something meaningful out of my life, even when I only see scattered pieces or slow progress?
- How is Jesus inviting me to see my identity not just in my background or history, but in being part of His family and His ongoing story of grace?

## 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?

Thank God for one person in your family or story who has shaped you

Choose one person – living or deceased – whose presence, sacrifice, faith, or love has influenced your life. Pray for them or reach out to them with a message of gratitude. This honours the way God works through ordinary people, just as He did in Jesus' genealogy.

Offer one part of your story to God that needs healing or hope

Identify one area of your past or family history that feels painful, complicated, or unfinished. Pray: "Lord, work through this part of my story as You worked through the stories in Your family line." This opens your story to God's transforming grace.

### O Antiphon

#### December 17<sup>th</sup> - O Wisdom

**Reflection Question:** Where do I most need God's wisdom in my decisions, relationships, or worries?

**Prayer:** O Wisdom, guide my thoughts and choices with Your clarity and peace.

**Action:** Ask the Holy Spirit for wisdom before making one decision today.

## Thursday, December 18<sup>th</sup> – Matthew 1:18-24

### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

This is how Jesus Christ came to be born. His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph; but before they came to live together she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit. Her husband Joseph; being a man of honour and wanting to spare her publicity, decided to divorce her informally. He had made up his mind to do this when the angel of the Lord appeared to him 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.  
(Matthew 1:18-24)

### 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 is God inviting me to trust Him in a situation that feels confusing, uncertain, or different from what I expected?
- What fear is God asking me to surrender so that I can hear His voice more clearly?
- How is the Holy Spirit prompting me to act with quiet faithfulness today, even if no one else sees or understands my obedience?

### 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?

#### Surrender one fear or worry to God in prayer

Identify one specific fear, about the future, a relationship, a decision, or something uncertain, and place it before God as Joseph did. Pray: "Lord, help me trust Your plan even when I don't see the whole path."

#### Do one quiet act of faithfulness that no one sees

Choose one hidden act of love, e.g. praying for someone, helping without credit, forgiving silently, or choosing patience. This mirrors Joseph's quiet obedience, whose faithfulness shaped the story of salvation without fanfare.

## O Antiphon

### December 18<sup>th</sup> - O Lord (Adonai)

**Reflection Question:** Where is Jesus inviting me to trust His strength instead of relying only on my own?

**Prayer:** O Lord, be my strength and help me to walk in Your freedom.

**Action:** Surrender one situation to God by praying, "Lord, I place this in Your hands."

**1. Read: What does the passage say?**

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

In the days of King Herod of Judaea there lived a priest called Zechariah who belonged to the Abijah section of the priesthood, and he had a wife, Elizabeth by name, who was a descendant of Aaron. Both were worthy in the sight of God, and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord. But they were childless: Elizabeth was barren and they were both getting on in years. Now it was the turn of Zechariah's section to serve, and he was exercising his priestly office before God when it fell to him by lot, as the ritual custom was, to enter the Lord's sanctuary and burn incense there. And at the hour of incense the whole congregation was outside, praying. Then there appeared to him 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; he must drink no wine, no strong drink. Even from his mother's womb he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, and he will bring back many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. With the spirit and power of Elijah, he will go before him to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children and the disobedient back to the wisdom that the virtuous have, preparing for the Lord a people fit for him.' Zechariah said to the angel, 'How can I be sure of this? I am an old man and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel who stand in God's presence, and I have been sent to speak to you and bring you this good news. Listen! Since you have not believed my words, which will come true at their appointed time, you will be silenced and have no power of speech until this has happened.' Meanwhile the people were waiting for Zechariah and were surprised that he stayed in the sanctuary so long. When he came out he could not speak to them, and they realised that he had received a vision in the sanctuary. But he could only make signs to them, and remained dumb. When his time of service came to an end he returned home. Some time later his wife Elizabeth conceived, and for five months she kept to herself. 'The Lord has done this for me' she said 'now that it has pleased him to take away the humiliation I suffered among men.' (Luke 1:5-25)

## 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 in my life am I praying or hoping for something that seems delayed or impossible, like Zechariah and Elizabeth, and how is God inviting me to wait with trust?
- What doubts or discouragements do I need to bring honestly before God, remembering that He meets even our uncertainty with patience and promise?
- How might God be preparing something quietly within me – something I cannot yet see – that will bear fruit in His perfect time?

## 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 one honest doubt or desire to God in prayer

Choose something you've been waiting for, worrying about, or finding hard to trust. Tell God openly: "Lord, this is where I struggle. Help me to trust Your timing." This mirrors Zechariah's honest encounter with God.



### Do one act of hope while you wait

Waiting doesn't have to be passive. Choose one hopeful action e.g. light a candle, read a Scripture promise, encourage someone else, or take a small step toward something you've been praying for.

This keeps your heart open to God's quiet work, just as He prepared Elizabeth for new life.

### O Antiphon

#### **December 19<sup>th</sup> - O Root of Jesse**

**Reflection Question:** What part of my life feels uprooted or unstable and needs God's grounding presence?

**Prayer:** O Root of Jesse, plant me firmly in Your love and faithfulness.

**Action:** Spend two minutes in silence, imagining your heart being rooted in God.

## Saturday, December 20<sup>th</sup> – Luke 1:26-38

### 1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

The angel Gabriel was sent by God to a town in Galilee called Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man named Joseph, of the House of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. He went in and said to her, '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! You are to conceive and bear a son, and you must name him Jesus. He will be great and will be called Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David; he will rule over the House of Jacob for ever and his reign will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'But how can this come about, since I am a virgin?' 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you' the angel answered 'and the power of the Most High will cover you with its shadow. And so the child will be holy and will be called Son of God. Know this too: your kinswoman Elizabeth has, in her old age, herself conceived a son, and she whom people called barren is now in her sixth month, for nothing is impossible to God.' 'I am the handmaid of the Lord,' said Mary 'let what you have said be done to me.' And the angel left her.

(Luke 1:26-38)

### 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 is God inviting me to openness or surrender, even in an area of my life that feels uncertain or beyond my understanding – just as Mary received a message she could not fully grasp?
- What fear or hesitation might be preventing me from saying a deeper “yes” to God’s plan, and how is the Holy Spirit reassuring me as He reassured Mary?
- How is God asking me to welcome His presence into my daily life – not just in big decisions, but in the ordinary moments where He desires to dwell with me?

### **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?**

Do something today that welcomes Christ into your space

Place a small image, candle, or Scripture verse somewhere visible. This is a symbolic way of saying, “Lord, I make room for You,” just as Mary made room for Jesus.

Offer God one part of your life that feels uncertain

Think of an area where you don’t have clarity, e.g. your future, a relationship, or work. Pray: “Lord, I give You this uncertainty. Be with me here.” This mirrors Mary’s trust in the unknown.

## O Antiphon

### December 20<sup>th</sup> - O Key of David

**Reflection Question:** What feels closed, blocked, or locked in my life?

**Prayer:** O Key of David, unlock what is closed in me and open the way to new life.

**Action:** Offer forgiveness to someone, or pray for the grace to begin forgiving.

### Weekly Closing Reflection:

Gaudete Rejoice! Even in unfinished places, God's joy breaks through. What word of joy has God spoken to you this week? Carry that joy gently into the lives of others as a sign of His nearness.



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



Web: [corkandross.org](http://corkandross.org)



Facebook: [CorkandRossDiocese](https://www.facebook.com/CorkandRossDiocese)



YouTube: [DioceseofCorkandRoss](https://www.youtube.com/DioceseofCorkandRoss)



Instagram: [diocese\\_cork\\_and\\_ross/](https://www.instagram.com/diocese_cork_and_ross/)



# Diocese of Cork and Ross