

Diocese of Cork and Ross

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

2nd Week of Advent



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Week 2 of Advent

Waiting in Hope: Listening for God's promise of mercy and restoration

2nd Sunday of Advent - Matthew 3:1-12

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

In due course John the Baptist appeared; he preached in the wilderness of Judaea and this was his message: 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is close at hand.' This was the man the prophet Isaiah spoke of when he said: A voice cries in the wilderness: Prepare a way for the Lord, make his paths straight. This man John wore a garment made of camel-hair with a leather belt round his waist, and his food was locusts and wild honey. Then Jerusalem and all Judaea and the whole Jordan district made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. But when he saw a number of Pharisees and Sadducees coming for baptism he said to them, 'Brood of vipers, who warned you to fly from the retribution that is coming? But if you are repentant, produce the appropriate fruit, and do not presume to tell yourselves, "We have Abraham for our father," because, I tell you, God can raise children for Abraham from these stones. Even now the axe is laid to the roots of the trees, so that any tree which fails to produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown on the fire. I baptise you in water for repentance, but the one who follows me is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals; he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing-fan is in his hand; he will clear his threshing-floor and gather his wheat into the barn; but the chaff he will burn in a fire that will never go out.' (Matthew 3:1-12)

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 attitudes, e.g. resentment, fear, pride, or complacency etc. might be keeping you from recognising God's work?
- In what ways do you feel stuck or hesitant, even when you sense God inviting you into something deeper?
- Where do you sense Jesus calling you into greater freedom, healing, or authenticity?

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?

Clear out one small "inner obstacle"

Choose one attitude or habit that clutters your heart, e.g. resentment, impatience, negativity, over-scrolling, gossip, self-criticism, and intentionally set it aside for today. Pray: "Lord, clear a straight path in my heart for You." This is a practical way to "prepare the way of the Lord" within yourself.

Do one concrete act that bears "good fruit"

St. John the Baptist says, "Produce good fruit." Choose one outward, visible act of goodness today: apologise where needed, forgive someone silently, give to someone in need, or do a hidden act of charity. This makes your faith tangible.

Monday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception - 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 in my life is God inviting me to say “yes”?
- What fears, doubts, or limitations do I need to place before God?
- How is God reassuring me today that His presence is enough for the mission He entrusts to 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?

Say a small, honest “yes” to God in one area of your day.

Choose one place where God might be nudging you, e.g. reaching out to someone, slowing down, forgiving, serving, praying, or making a good decision. Pray Mary’s words in your own way: “Lord, let it be done in me. I say yes to You today.” This makes Mary’s openness real in your ordinary life.

Encourage someone who feels afraid or uncertain

Just as the angel told Mary, “Do not be afraid,” offer those words through a simple gesture:

- send a reassuring message,
- listen to someone who is anxious,
- remind a friend they are not alone.

This helps you become a messenger of God’s presence, a small “angel”, in someone else’s day.

Tuesday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Matthew 18:12-14

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Tell me. Suppose a man has a hundred sheep and one of them strays; will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hillside and go in search of the stray? I tell you solemnly, if he finds it, it gives him more joy than do the ninety-nine that did not stray at all. Similarly, it is never the will of your Father in heaven that one of these little ones should be lost.' (Matthew 18:12-14)

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:

- Are there habits, attitudes, or relationships where I've moved away from God's voice or care?
- How does it feel to be sought by God?
- Is there someone in your life who needs from you what God has shown you – persistence, compassion, and a refusal to give up?

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?

Let yourself be “found” by God

Set aside 10 minutes today with no phone and no noise. Simply say, “Here I am, Lord.” Let God come to you – through silence, a line of Scripture, or just a sense of being held. This is your way of pausing your wandering, and allowing the Shepherd to lift you onto His shoulders.

Reach out to one “missing” person

Think of someone who has drifted to the edges socially, emotionally, or spiritually. Send a message, make a call, or stop by to check in. Keep it simple: “You came to mind today – just wanted you to know I’m thinking of you.” This mirrors the shepherd’s initiative: moving toward someone who may feel unseen or forgotten.

Saint of the Day

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin who saw Our Lady of Guadalupe. Through his faithful “yes,” St. Juan Diego reminds us that God draws close to the lowly and reveals His tender love to those the world often overlooks.

Wednesday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Matthew 11:28-30

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

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.' (Matthew 11:28-30)

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 burden are you carrying?
- What does rest in Jesus look like for you?
- How can you slow down 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?

Lay down one burden intentionally

Identify one thing that is weighing on you: a worry, decision, tension, or expectation. Pause for a moment and hand it to Jesus by praying: “Jesus, I give this to You. Carry it for me.” Then consciously stop revisiting it throughout the day.

Choose a gentle response in a moment of stress

When you face irritation, pressure, or conflict today, choose gentleness instead of force. Invite the Holy Spirit to guide you, speak calmly, slow your pace, or take a deep breath before responding.

This mirrors Jesus’ heart: “I am gentle and humble in heart.”

Saint of the Day

Today we also celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Loreto who welcomed God into the humble home of Nazareth, and shows us that true rest begins where Christ is allowed to dwell. Just as Jesus invites us to find peace in His gentle and humble heart, Mary teaches us to create a space within ourselves where God’s presence brings comfort, strength, and serenity.

Thursday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Matthew 11:11-15

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

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!' (Matthew 11:11-15)

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 show the same courage and steadfastness that marked the life of John the Baptist?
- What inner resistance or fear keeps me from fully receiving the Kingdom of God in my daily life?
- How might I prepare my heart today to listen more deeply to God's voice?

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?

Create space for God by removing one small distraction

Clear away one piece of spiritual “clutter” today, e.g. silence notifications, take a short break from social media, pause before reacting, or spend two minutes in quiet. This helps you become more attentive to God’s voice, just as Jesus invites in this passage.

Do one courageous good thing you usually avoid

Choose one small act that requires courage or honesty, for example, apologising, setting a boundary, speaking the truth with love, starting a needed conversation, or making a decision you’ve been delaying. This mirrors the boldness of John the Baptist, who prepared the way without fear.

Saint of the Day

Today we also celebrate the feast of St. Damasus I, pope, who devoted his life to preserving the true faith and honouring the martyrs, showing the same courageous fidelity that Jesus praises in John the Baptist. St. Damasus reminds us that God’s Kingdom advances when we stand firmly for truth with humility and conviction.

Friday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Matthew 11:16-19

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

Jesus spoke to the crowds: 'What description can I find for this generation? It is like children shouting to each other as they sit in the market place: "We played the pipes for you, and you wouldn't dance; we sang dirges, and you wouldn't be mourners." 'For John came, neither eating nor drinking, and they say, "He is possessed." The Son of Man came, eating and drinking, and they say, "Look, a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners." Yet wisdom has been proved right by her actions.' (Matthew 11:16-19)

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 are you resistant to God's movement, perhaps in a situation where you sense a nudge to forgive, listen, or change, but you hesitate?
- How can you cultivate openness today, maybe by pausing before reacting, or by giving someone the benefit of the doubt instead of jumping to conclusions?
- What assumption can you let go of (e.g. believing you know how God should act)?

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 God to open your heart

Spend five quiet minutes asking God to show you where your heart is closed and invite Him to open it. Sit in silence and pray: "Lord, show me where I resist You, and soften my heart to Your presence." This allows you to recognise the subtle ways you may dismiss God's invitations, just as the crowds ignored Jesus in the Gospel, and it opens space for a more honest, receptive relationship with Him.

Suspend one habitual judgment for the whole day

Pick one recurring judgment — about a coworker, family member, neighbour, or situation — and intentionally set it aside today. Pray: "Lord, help me see this with Your eyes, not my assumptions." This opens your heart to the wisdom Jesus says many fail to recognise.

Saint of the Day

Today is the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe who appeared to St. John Diego, someone the world easily overlooked, revealing God's love in a way many did not expect or understand. Like the people in the Gospel who struggled to recognise God's wisdom, we are invited to open our hearts to the surprising, tender, and unexpected ways God still speaks through Mary and through the humble today.

Saturday of the 2nd Week of Advent – Matthew 17:10-13

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

As they came down from the mountain the disciples put this question to Jesus, 'Why do the scribes say that Elijah has to come first?' 'True;' he replied 'Elijah is to come to see that everything is once more as it should be; however, I tell you that Elijah has come already and they did not recognise him but treated him as they pleased; and the Son of Man will suffer similarly at their hands.' The disciples understood then that he had been speaking of John the Baptist. (Matthew 17:10-13)

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 have you overlooked God's voice, perhaps in the words of someone you dismissed, or in a gentle prompting from the Holy Spirit that you brushed aside?
- What helps you listen more deeply to God speaking with you?
- Where is God nudging you quietly (e.g. in a desire for peace, a repeated thought, a person who keeps coming to mind, or a subtle invitation to take a small step of faith)?

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?

Create a moment of silence to listen for God's whisper

Turn off noise (phone, radio, music, notifications) for five minutes today and sit in stillness. Pray gently: "Speak, Lord, I am listening." This makes room for the subtle ways God tries to reach you.

Respond to a small inner nudge with faith

Pay attention to one quiet prompting — a thought to reach out to someone, say a prayer, apologise, offer help, or choose patience — and act on it today. This honours the Gospel's call to recognise God's presence in subtle, unexpected movements of your heart.

Saint of the Day

Today we celebrate the feast of St. Lucy, whose name means "light." St. Lucy reminds us that God's presence often comes quietly, illuminating our hearts in subtle but powerful ways, much like Elijah, who was unnoticed by many. Her steadfast faith encourages us to open our eyes to the gentle light of God's guidance, especially when it comes in the small, hidden moments of our day.

Weekly Closing Reflection:

This week reveals a God who seeks, restores, and carries us. Where have you experienced His mercy? Ask the Lord to deepen your trust in His promise to make all things new beginning in your own heart.



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



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