

Diocese of Cork and Ross

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

4th Week of Advent



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Week 4 of Advent

Waiting in Hope: Listening for God's promise drawing near in Emmanuel

4th Sunday of Advent - December 21st – 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:

- How do I react when God's plan disrupts my own, and what does Joseph teach me about receiving God's will with humility rather than frustration or fear?
- Where might God be asking me to protect or care for someone in my life, as Joseph was entrusted with Mary and the unborn Jesus?
- What does Joseph's attentiveness to God in his dreams reveal about how I can become more attentive to God's voice in the quiet or hidden parts of my own life?

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?

Make space for God's quiet voice

Set aside three minutes today with no phone, music, or noise. Sit in silence and pray: "Lord, speak to me in the quiet as You spoke to Joseph." This creates room for God to guide you in the hidden, subtle ways He often prefers.

Protect or support someone God has entrusted to you

Identify one person in your life who may need encouragement, reassurance, or practical help today. Do one intentional act to support them, e.g. a message, a prayer, an offer of help, or simply being present. This mirrors Joseph's role as protector and guardian of Mary and Jesus.

O Antiphon

December 21st - O Rising Sun (O Dayspring)

Reflection Question: Where do I need Christ's light to shine (on my fear, sadness, confusion, or darkness etc.)?

Prayer: O Rising Sun, bring Your light into every shadow of my heart.

Action: Step outside and let the light (sun, sky, or fresh air) remind you of Christ's presence.



Monday, December 22nd – Luke 1:46-56

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

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, and his mercy reaches from age to age for those who fear him. He has shown the power of his arm, he has routed the proud of heart. He has pulled down princes from their thrones and exalted the lowly. The hungry he has filled with good things, the rich sent empty away. He has come to the help of Israel his servant, mindful of his mercy – according to the promise he made to our ancestors – of his mercy to Abraham and to his descendants for ever.' Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back home. (Luke 1:46-56)

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 I seen God's goodness or mercy in my own life recently, even in small or surprising ways, just as Mary recognised God at work in her?
- What part of my heart needs to learn Mary's humility – to let God be the one who lifts, guides, and strengthens me rather than relying only on myself?
- How is God inviting me to join Him in lifting up the lowly – through kindness, encouragement, or compassion toward someone who needs hope 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?

Name and thank God for three blessings today.

Pause and intentionally recognise three ways God has been good to you – big or small. Speak them aloud or write them down as your own “Magnificat.” This helps you cultivate the same spirit of praise that filled Mary’s heart.

Lift up someone who feels low or overlooked

Reach out to someone who may be struggling, lonely, stressed, or unnoticed. Offer a kind word, encouragement, prayer, or practical help. This mirrors the God who “raises up the lowly” and makes you a channel of His mercy.

O Antiphon

December 22nd – O King of Nations

Reflection Question: How can I work for unity and peace in my relationships today?

Prayer: O King of Nations, heal division and make me an instrument of Your peace.

Action: Do one act of reconciliation – reach out, apologise, or listen with patience.

Tuesday, December 23rd – Luke 1:57-66

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

The time came for Elizabeth to have her child, and she gave birth to a son; and when her neighbours and relations heard that the Lord had shown her so great a kindness, they shared her joy. Now on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; they were going to call him Zechariah after his father, but his mother spoke up. 'No,' she said 'he is to be called John.' They said to her, 'But no one in your family has that name', and made signs to his father to find out what he wanted him called. The father asked for a writing-tablet and wrote, 'His name is John.' And they were all astonished. At that instant his power of speech returned and he spoke and praised God. All their neighbours were filled with awe and the whole affair was talked about throughout the hill country of Judaea. All those who heard of it treasured it in their hearts. 'What will this child turn out to be?' they wondered. And indeed the hand of the Lord was with him. (Luke 1:57-66)

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 I seen God's goodness or mercy in my own life recently just as Mary recognised God at work in her?
- What part of my heart needs to learn Mary's humility – to let God be the one who lifts, guides, and strengthens me rather than relying only on myself?
- How is God inviting me to join Him in lifting up the lowly – through kindness, encouragement, or compassion toward someone who needs hope 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?

Claim one truth about who you are in God's eyes

Choose a Scripture-based identity (e.g., beloved, chosen, forgiven, called, God's child) and repeat it to yourself throughout the day. Let this truth shape how you see yourself, just as John's God-given name shaped his mission.

Affirm someone else's God-given gifts

Tell one person today something you genuinely appreciate about them – a gift, virtue, or strength you see in them. This mirrors the way God revealed John's identity through the community and invites you to call forth goodness in others.

O Antiphon

December 23rd – O Emmanuel

Reflection Question: Where do I most need to remember that God is with me right now?

Prayer: O Emmanuel, be with me in every moment and fill my heart with Your nearness.

Action: Pray slowly: "God-with-us, be with me here," and notice His presence in your day.

Wednesday, December 24th – Luke 1:67-79

1. Read: What does the passage say?

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

John's father Zechariah was filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke this prophecy: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel for he has visited his people, he has come to their rescue and he has raised up for us a power for salvation in the House of his servant David, even as he proclaimed, by the mouth of his holy prophets from ancient times, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us. Thus he shows mercy to our ancestors, thus he remembers his holy covenant the oath he swore to our father Abraham that he would grant us, free from fear, to be delivered from the hands of our enemies, to serve him in holiness and virtue in his presence, all our days. And you, little child, you shall be called 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, to give light to those who live in darkness and the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace.'

(Luke 1:67-79)

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 I experienced God's mercy in my life, even in moments when I felt lost, unsure, or discouraged?
- What areas of my life feel like "darkness" or confusion right now, and how might God be gently guiding my feet toward a path of peace?
- How is God inviting me to prepare the way for Him today — through forgiveness, encouragement, or offering hope to someone who needs light?

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 Light Into One Small Place Of Darkness

Choose one area of struggle (e.g. worry, sadness, frustration, or confusion) and invite God's light into it by praying: "Lord, guide my feet into Your peace." You might also light a candle or sit in a bright space as a sign of opening that area to Him.

Offer a word of hope to someone else

Reach out to someone who seems discouraged, stressed, or overwhelmed, and send a short message of encouragement or prayer. Just as John the Baptist was called to "prepare the way," you become a small messenger of God's tenderness to another person.

Weekly Closing Reflection:

Emmanuel, God-with-us, draws close. As Advent reaches its final days, where do you feel God's closeness most deeply? Offer Him your longing, your waiting, and your hope trusting the One who comes to dwell with you.

Closing Reflection for Advent

As Advent draws to a close, take a moment to look back over the journey. Where have you noticed God speaking His promises? What word, image, or moment of grace has stayed with you? Advent reminds us that God's promises unfold slowly, tenderly often in hidden ways. Carry this hope with you into the season ahead:

- God has been at work in your waiting.
- His promise has been taking root in silence.
- His light has been growing, even in the shadows.

Ask the Holy Spirit to help you continue listening to God's Word, trusting that every promise He speaks moves toward fulfillment.

Christmas Day Reflection

Emmanuel: God's Promise Fulfilled

"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us." Today we rejoice because the promise we waited for has arrived quietly, humbly, beautifully. In Jesus, God has drawn close to the world and close to you. The hope of Advent becomes the reality of Christmas: God is with us. Take a moment to rest in this truth:

- God does not love you from a distance.
- He enters your story, your need, your longing.
- He delights to dwell with His people.

Let Christmas be not just a day, but a renewed awareness of God's closeness. Carry Emmanuel God-with-you into every place where hope, light, and love are needed. Amen.



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



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