



DIOCESE OF Hexham & Newcastle

# Reflections for the Season of Advent



3rd & 4th Weeks of Advent | 2022

# Reflections for Advent 2022

## An Introduction

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The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses the two-fold meaning of Christ's coming: the Church makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Saviour's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for His second coming (*Catechism*, 524).

Advent is when the Church re-sets the calendar of our remembering and celebrating the saving work of Christ. This Advent is more challenging due to the threats and challenges facing us. Our usual distraction with gifts and cards seems more distant this year. We're aware of people's worries over food and fuel, safety and health. So, these resources are offered as a lifebuoy, a remedy and a prayer book for the days ahead. Advent is a time to stretch and arouse our imagination for what it brings: a maturing expectation and sensitivity to the Lord's coming as judge and new-born child. Enjoy these reflections and prayers. Happy Advent!

**Monsignor Andrew Faley**

**Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate for Faith & Mission**

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## Advent Audio Reflections

The Vicariate for Faith & Mission is offering an audio version of the Advent Sunday Gospels and reflections to accompany the written version.

These short reflections present an opportunity to pause in our busy lives, and to take time to listen to and reflect on the Word of God, read by voices from around the Diocese.

The audio reflections will be available to download on the Diocesan website in due course.

[bit.ly/DHNAAdvent2022](https://bit.ly/DHNAAdvent2022)

## Third Week of Advent

# Sunday 11th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 35:1-6, 10; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 145:6-10;

Reading 2, James 5: 7-10; Gospel, Matthew 11:2-11

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John the Baptist, having been arrested just as Jesus was about to begin his ministry, is now imprisoned. From his prison cell, John seems to question his own conviction that Jesus truly is the "one who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to carry his sandals." (Matthew 3:11)

We can actually take some comfort from this – that he, who Jesus calls the greatest to be born of a woman, has his own moments of doubt. We, like John, can have our faith tested whilst imprisoned in one way or another – chained to our work, shackled by broken promises, held captive by debt, slaves to material possessions or controlled by an ailment, to make a few suggestions.

Jesus is only too aware of this because He knows what it means to be human. He simply asks John, his followers and us to maintain the faith in the One who makes the blind see, the deaf hear and the lame walk. These were the actions that were prophesied by Isaiah and they are the actions performed by Jesus, the true Messiah.

In today's readings, Isaiah writes of vengeance and retribution, and this image of the destructive fire of the Spirit is the one John had earlier used when preaching of the one who was to come after him. The fire of the Spirit, though, is warming and restorative and Jesus appeared as a Messiah who would focus on healing the prisoner rather than destroying the prison system. Jesus' words at the end of today's Gospel reading, therefore, are in praise of John and are of encouragement to all to keep believing in Him.

Advent once again gives us time to prepare for the Lord's coming. We quite rightly prepare to remember and celebrate Christ's birthday, whilst we patiently await Christ's second coming in glory. However, we also wait for the Lord to continually seek out all who are confined within their individual, personal prisons and for the healing, consolation and freedom that His Spirit brings. Today, on this Gaudete Sunday, we have much to rejoice in!

**Reflection written by: Patrick Rutherford, Blessed Edmund Duke Parish,  
Coxhoe, Sedgefield and Trimdon**

## Third Week of Advent

# Monday 12th December 2022

Reading 1, Numbers 24: 2-7, 15-17; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 24: 4-9;

Gospel, Matthew 21: 23-27

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While Jesus Christ was in the temple teaching, the religious leaders confronted him with the question, "By what authority are you doing these things; and who gave you this authority?" In this way, they tried to refute Jesus' identity and oppose his mission as the Son of God.

Focused on his mission, Jesus refused to be drawn into arguments. In his wisdom he chose to address another question to them. Through this question, he challenged them to go and reflect on the mission of John the Baptist who was sent to announce his (Jesus') coming.

Jesus confronted these religious leaders with the absurdity of refusing to accept Him as Messiah. In the face of the wisdom of God made manifest in Jesus, their craftiness and stubbornness of heart were unmasked.

Jesus teaches us the value and richness of courage anchored on wisdom not on brutal force. The messianic victory we read about in the first reading finds its perfect accomplishment in him; the victory of wisdom over ignorance, the victory of humble instruction over the tricky attacks of his detractors.

Lord, we thank you for granting us the privilege to know you, to love you and to serve you in different capacities. Give us the grace to imitate your gentleness and your wisdom. Guide us through the storms and perils of our time especially when challenged in our mission and when indecision clouds our thoughts.

As we prepare to celebrate the mystery of your birth, grant us victory in our daily struggles to stand firm in defence of the truth.

**Reflection written by: Ngozi Chukwu,  
St. Joseph's Catholic Church, Gateshead**



## Third Week of Advent

# Tuesday 13th December 2022

Reading 1, Zephaniah 3:1-2, 9-13; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 33:2-3, 6-7, 17-18, 19, 23;

Gospel, Matthew 21:28-32

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In today's Gospel we find Jesus gives us the parable of the Two Sons (this is the second parable concerning a man with two sons); it is interesting to note that women do not seem to have a place in parables.

Jesus has just had a great argument with the Chief Priests and Elders of the Temple. "By whose authority are you teaching and preaching" they ask, "for you are not a priest, Levite or a learned rabbi?"

In this parable of the Two Sons, Jesus is making the point that as far as He is concerned, there are two types of Jews: there are the 'faithless' leaders who know the Scriptures and the prophecies but who will not accept the teachings of Jesus, and then there are the faithful outcasts; the 'untouchables', the public sinners, the prostitutes, the tax collectors who accept wholeheartedly the teachings of Jesus and who are aware of their need of forgiveness (this is also an indication that Jesus' teachings are also to be applicable to the Gentiles). For those in authority, this was a shocking paradox to be told that the outcasts, the untouchables, would be allowed to enter the Kingdom.

Jesus does say that it is not those who outwardly say "Lord, Lord" who will enter the Kingdom, but those who 'hear the Word of the Lord and believe.'

Jesus of course IS the WORD of God, and we should listen to every word that He utters.

When I was a young boy (many, many years ago), rationing of sweets had just ended. There still wasn't a big choice, but one of my favourites was Rowntree's Fruit Gums. My friends and I would have competitions to see who could make their fruit last the longest. We would slowly suck our fruit gum until it had disappeared!

Perhaps during these remaining days of Advent, we could spend 10 to 15 minutes a day reading a short piece of Scripture. Think about it, mull it over, reflect upon it until, like my dissolving fruit gum, it sinks into my very being to become part of me.

"Taste and See that the Lord is good!"

**Reflection written by: Deacon Jude Newton,  
St Ninian's, Wooler, Northumberland**

## Third Week of Advent

# Wednesday 14th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 45:6-8, 18, 21-25; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 84: 9-14;

Gospel, Luke 7:19-23

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### ***'Blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me'***

Reading through this passage, I was attracted to this: *"Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?"* Interestingly Jesus did not choose a 'yes or no' answer, rather he drew their attention to the obvious miracles happening through Him. Hence, His reply: *"Go back and report what you have seen and heard: the blind receive sight."* Why did He reply in that manner? Was He stirring them to build their own opinion/conviction about Himself, having observed things themselves? I would think so, in fact, something similar to His interaction with His own disciples (Mt16:13&15), asking them *"Who do people say the Son of Man is?" ... "But Who do You say I am?"*

A little reflection exercise might help us dig deeper: Knowing that Jesus is always the same and that His Word is alive and active, let us individually imagine ourselves before Him like those disciples and being addressed in those words (*go back and report what you've seen and heard---*). Now, what do I know about Jesus and His action? How do I perceive His presence in my life and the world around me? Who is He to me? Am I convinced He is the Lord we have awaited or am I still searching for someone elsewhere? These are some thoughts that sprang up which you could make your own and occupy yourselves with. For example, perceiving Jesus as my Lord and Master, in what and how could I engage more with Him and His mission on earth? It could be finding out various ways to reach out to the poor, proclaiming the Good-News to them, which is one of Jesus' missions mentioned in this particular passage. Remember, the Lord invites us always for a closer, personal relationship with Himself and the Church offers us special periods like this Advent for a deeper encounter.

So, as we faithfully await the Lord this Advent, may we receive His blessings, trusting in His word: *"Blessed is anyone who takes no offence at me."*

**Reflection written by: Sr Paschaline Okolo,  
Our Lady Immaculate and St Cuthbert, Crook**

## Third Week of Advent

# Thursday 15th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 54:1-10; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 29:2, 4, 5-6, 11-13;

Gospel, Luke 7:24-30

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Here in Luke, Jesus challenges expectation and makes us question what it is that impresses us and what our true values are. Jesus is impressed by John, but this has nothing to do with John's attire or indeed the way in which John lived. As is suggested, John lived a difficult life in the wilderness and was not concerned by materialism or wealth, as some of the crowd may have been. Instead, John was a prophet, a messenger who was sent by God to pave the way for Jesus. The Jewish expectations of the Messiah were heavily influenced by the Pharisaic tradition of a descendant of King David, a strong and powerful ruler that would establish God's law on earth. However, as is often the case, expectation and reality are two very different things. The reality can often lead to feelings of discontentment and unhappiness because we have created and built up an expectation that is almost impossible to fulfil.

Jesus is highlighting that our expectation of God's Kingdom may have been or may still be one of finery and luxury. However, as Jesus states: "He who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." Jesus infers that God's Kingdom does not reflect the general expectation of how kingdoms and royalty are usually perceived. Instead, he uses John as a symbol of greatness based on his words, his actions, and his integrity. In the Advent season this is directly linked to our preparations for Christmas and the birth of Jesus. Is our expectation of the Christmas season overshadowed by materialism? When the shepherds and kings arrived to the stable, was the reality of what they found in line with their expectation? Probably not, however, were their hearts moved by the reality? Was this moment significant in helping them realise what impressed them and what their true values were?

As we move through Advent, our preparations can focus more on the reality of those around us, our friends, or family and the wider community. Can we make time for others, make time for God, and ensure that it is reality and not expectation that drives us?

**Reflection written by: Andrew Davis**

## Third Week of Advent

# Friday 16th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 56:1-3, 6-8; Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 66:2-3, 5, 7-8;

Gospel, John 5:33-36

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This is the last day of the first part of Advent. We have been called to be a people of joyful and hopeful expectation as we wait for God's plan of salvation to be fulfilled. From tomorrow we will focus on those key events before the birth of Jesus.

As we wait, St John the Baptist is given as our model to follow. We are told today by Jesus that although he was not 'the Light' he is a lamp alight and shining; he is the one who witnesses to Jesus.

For me John the Baptist is the ultimate expression of what it means to be a prophet. Prophets are attentive to what is and what should be. They cry out when the gap between the two is obstructive of God's plan and damages humanity and all of creation. Prophets have a critical voice that is willing to speak truth to power. But prophets are called to have a vision of hope of what the world could be; of a world transformed, a world where true justice and a genuine peace can be attained.

What is your vision of a world transformed? There will always be a gap of what should be and what is, but it will be narrowed if through the Spirit we seek a world that is different to how it is now. We can be a 'lamp alight and shining' towards Jesus, if in some way our actions seek to make the world kinder and fairer, more just and peaceful. We all have to discern what that means, but it does not have to be something big or significant. By simply accompanying people, being simply present to others we can be, as Theodora Hawksley points out in her book on Peacebuilding and Catholic Social Teaching, 'sacraments of consolation'; that in itself can be transformative for others and an expression of our vision of hope, faith and love.



**Reflection written by: Fr Chris Hughes,**

**Parish Priest of St Cuthbert's and St Joseph's, North Shields**



## Third Week of Advent

# Saturday 17th December 2022

Reading 1, Genesis 49:2, 8-10; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 71:3-4, 7-8, 17;

Gospel, Matthew 1:1-17

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Abraham, Isaac, Jacob: how familiar these names that open Matthew's Gospel today. But soon we struggle... Perez, Zerah, Hezron. Hmm! Relief again to hear: Boaz, Obed, Jesse. And a big welcome to David and Solomon!

Can we place ourselves among Matthew's first hearers: the Scribes and Pharisees, the critics and the curious, the newly converted or upholders of the Ancient Faith? For them, and for them especially, Matthew's Gospel has gathered together all the oft repeated teachings, the miracle stories, the dramatic events leading to Christ's arrest and crucifixion and the end, but not the end, in the days that followed when Matthew with the other apostles, (eleven, as he precisely records) were commissioned by the Risen Lord to preach his Gospel.

These people are Christ's people, they share his ancestry, and, throughout the account, Matthew is at pains to open their eyes to recognise in Jesus the long-promised Messiah and to acknowledge the part they and their leaders have played in rejecting him. Even after the Resurrection, Matthew reminds them, "the story told to this day among the Jews is that Christ's body was taken away by his disciples in the night."

The passage chosen for today is the carefully constructed preface designed by Matthew to place Jesus in the historical narrative his Jewish listeners would know so well. The list of ancestors, divided into three sets of fourteen generations: from Abraham to David, David to the Deportation and the Return from Exile to Jesus, born of Mary and Joseph of the House of David.

One of my joys a few years ago visiting schools in Africa and, in particular, among the Dinka children of South Sudan, was to challenge them to name their ancestors. I knew that village life and stories around the fire at night had taught them well. They would proudly recite as many as twelve generations (a mere four hundred years) while their classmates nodded in agreement.

The experience helped me to relate to this passage and know that even Matthew's sternest critics there would respond with pride and would be joining in, mouthing the familiar names.

How amazing that we too can claim that inheritance, cherished and passed down to us through two millennia, "the promises made to Abraham, Our Father."

Come, Lord, Jesus!  
Come to the hearts that are waiting.

**Reflection written by: Maureen Limer, rsm**

**Our Lady of Mercy, Sunderland**



Hozana is a Catholic App and website, ran by a young team of 20 Catholics working to spread prayer with a unique community driven focus.

Hozana gathers people to prayer through prayer communities and through a prayer intentions tool.

People can pray directly for one another or with each other through prayer communities, with options for written, audio or video.

Prayer communities are developed around the liturgical calendar and themes such as work, saints, motherhood and we welcome you to get in touch with us if you have a gift for writing.



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[hozana.org/en](https://hozana.org/en)

## Fourth Week of Advent

# Sunday 18th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 7:10-14; Responsorial Psalm, Psalms 23:1-6;

Reading 2, Romans 1:1-17; Gospel, Matthew 1:18-24

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Just imagine the gossip! Mary and Joseph lived in a small, tight community where everyone knew each other's business. They were betrothed, but they hadn't yet come to live together. Mary's pregnancy could only be the result of either adultery or rape – and either way, it was a scandal. If Joseph demanded a public trial, it could end with Mary being stoned to death. It was to avoid such a scandal that he chose to end their betrothal informally and privately.

Joseph, a man of honour, was ready to act compassionately towards Mary. But God called him to take a step further; to welcome Mary home as his wife, and to accept as his own the son that she was carrying. Joseph was asked to make a supreme act of faith, and he responded courageously. He embraced his part in God's plan of salvation.

Today, social media offers many more opportunities for gossip and scandal than in Gospel times, and still it's often women who are targeted for public condemnation. Pope Francis has described gossip as 'a plague' that 'destroys the work of God'. Today's Gospel should prompt us to examine our conscience and our conversation; to ask ourselves how we spend our time online, and whether we sometimes enjoy knocking others down more than building them up.

The Christmas story shows us how the Incarnation of the Son of God depended on the faithful response of ordinary people. Mary and Joseph responded generously, even when God called them to go beyond the bounds of 'respectability' and beyond anything that seemed reasonable or sensible. As we draw closer to Christmas, we can reflect on how their faith and courage made them ready to welcome the Saviour, and we can ask God for the grace to follow their example of discipleship.

**Reflection written by: Andrew Downie, Parish Priest of St Cuthbert's, Durham;  
Parochial Administrator of St Patrick's, Langley Moor;  
Catholic Chaplain to Durham University**

## Fourth Week of Advent

Monday 19th December 2022

Reading 1, Judges 13:2-7, 24-25; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 70:3-6, 16-17;

Gospel, Luke 1:5-25

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***'If you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans!'***

Today's Gospel tells us the story of a priest named Zechariah and his wife, Elizabeth. They are righteous people, "worthy in the sight of God and scrupulously observed all the commandments and observances of the Lord."

Both are "well advanced in years" and without any children. Infertility was almost always blamed on the women in Jewish culture at that time – children were God's greatest blessing on a family. Being childless meant that the woman must have done something to offend God.

Zechariah was chosen at random to perform the prestigious ritual of burning incense in the temple and, as he did so, the angel Gabriel appeared to tell him that their prayers for a child have been answered. Elizabeth is to bear a son who is to be called John who will be great in the sight of God and will bring many in Israel back to the Lord.

Zechariah asks how this could be as they are both getting on in years. Gabriel repeats the prophecy and strikes Zechariah dumb because he doubted the message. Sure enough, in the course of time, Elizabeth bears a son whom we know as John the Baptist.

I imagine Zechariah and Elizabeth had resigned themselves to not having children – it would have been impossible anyway due to their advanced years. Nevertheless, despite their hurt and shame, they had remained true to the practice of their faith and lived lives of service in their community.

As we enter the final week of Advent, let us reflect on God's power to transform our lives even when change may seem impossible. Let's open our hearts and minds to God and pray that we might be more like Mary in response to God's promptings: "I am the handmaid of the Lord, let it be done unto me according to Your word."

**Reflection written by: Deacon Frank O'Neill, St John XXIII Parish**

## Fourth Week of Advent

Tuesday 20th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 7:10-14; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 23:1-6;

Gospel, Luke 1:26-38

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This Gospel is Luke's account of the Annunciation, a surprise initiative of God, perhaps the greatest moment in the history of the world – when heaven touched earth and God waited for the consent of a simple girl from Nazareth. This is the moment when God took on our humanity, becoming one of us in a way we can relate to, loving and living at close quarters, with all its limitations and weaknesses. On God's side, a mystery of pure love.

But everything depended on Mary. Luke presents Mary as a model disciple – one who hears the word of God and does it. For us, she is a model of faith who took a leap into the unknown, involving absolute trust in God not realising the implications of her 'Yes,' a 'yes,' she had to repeat many times in life, even to the foot of the cross.

Each of us has many 'yeses' in the course of our lives, some big, some small – every time we make a commitment like marriage or parenthood or assume the responsibilities of family, work, or daily challenges. When we say 'yes' to someone or something, we don't know the ramifications either. If we did, we might never say 'yes'! But like Mary, we take risks and walk with faith and love, renewing our 'yes' every day.

### Reflection

*- God surprised Mary with the shattering request to be the mother of his Son. Does God sometimes interrupt our lives and turn them upside down? What is our response?*

*- Mary's faith overcame her fear of the unknown. What am I afraid of in life? Can I say with Mary "Let it be done to me according to your word" and then believe the angel's words "Nothing is impossible to God."*

*- By her consent, Mary conceived the Son of God. How can we give a home to God's word and allow it to transform our lives?*

*Lord, give me the grace like Mary, to say 'Yes' as your will unfolds in my life.*

*Hail Mary.....*

**Reflection written by: Sr Michael Lee, Sunderland**



## Fourth Week of Advent

# Wednesday 21st December 2022

Reading 1, Zephaniah 3:14-18; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 32:2-3, 11-12, 20-21;

Gospel, Luke 1:39-45

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As I sit in prayer with today's Gospel passage, I am aware of a hurrying momentum, of excitement, of something momentous happening. Mary went 'with haste' to visit Elizabeth, the child 'leapt,' and Elizabeth 'exclaimed with a loud cry'.

The two women communicate their joy and their blessings to each other, and I see Mary in her role as the first evangelist, as she brings the Word to Elizabeth. In her turn, Elizabeth articulates the blessed role that is Mary's, the God-bearer and channel through which salvation comes into the world. She speaks out her praise of Mary and the glorious child that she carries with the words that are so familiar to us: Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb. In this way Mary is blessed from generation to generation, and in contemplation of this dramatic scene, the wonder and excitement of what has happened to the two women still has the power to thrill and inspire us. It shows us Mary as the model of Christian belief, of ready acceptance of God's will, and of joy in acting in accordance with it.

If I pray on the thought of her, she strengthens my belief in God and shows me how to trust in him. She teaches me never to doubt his promises. She inspires me to pray for that grace-filled state in which being in tune with God's wishes for me leads me forward into a deeper, richer relationship.

As well as the women in the scene, who are powerfully present before me, there are of course two extraordinary unseen protagonists, the unborn children. Elizabeth feels her child leap in her womb at the sound of Mary's greeting, as both mother and child feel the presence of their Lord. From the Christ-child, there is stillness, silence, and peace.



**Reflection written by: Beverley Hallam, Our Lady of Lourdes, Chopwell**

## Fourth Week of Advent

# Thursday 22nd December 2022

Reading 1, First Samuel 1:24-28; Responsorial Psalm, First Samuel 2:1, 4-8;

Gospel, Luke 1:46-56

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### ***'And Mary Said'***

Such a simple phrase but so full of meaning.

Two women, one young, one old, come together and talk about the miracle of life. Elizabeth is full of joy as she awaits the birth of a much longed for child, a child destined to bring a baptism of repentance to the people. Mary is young, presumably still trying to come to terms with her meeting with a heavenly Spirit, Gabriel, the messenger of God, and the stirrings within her of new life. She seeks to find the serenity which her older cousin has in abundance; she is worried and concerned for the future yet finds a strength from within which is beyond her understanding.

The Song of Mary is a proclamation of her faith in God. It is at once a prayer of thanksgiving for the child she is to bear and an acceptance that she has been chosen, from all humanity, to be the mother of God.

The Song takes us from her declaration of faith, through her acceptance of the task ahead, to the promise of future blessings. This little child, growing in her womb, is to be the Light of the World bringing God's love and mercy to dwell among us to bring justice to His people and change the world forever.

When I pray to Mary I do so because through her intercession I can come closer to her Son. I have a very powerful, personal image of a mother, old now, weary with care, standing at the foot of the cross. The Mary who follows her Son, through the shadows of death, to his glorious resurrection. The Mary who stands among His followers on the day of Pentecost and who is filled, once again, with the Holy Spirit of God.

**Reflection written by: David Frank, Holy Family Parish, Hartlepool.**

## Fourth Week of Advent

# Friday 23rd December 2022

Reading 1, Malachi 3:1-4, 23-24; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 24:4-5, 8-10, 14;

Gospel, Luke 1:57-66

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Today's readings focus on the importance in trusting in God's providence in our lives. When trusting in God's providence, rather than our own will, the fruits of God's treasures will flourish within us, and we will begin to live more fully. We will better acknowledge God's gifts in our lives and will become a new creation, once again.

When Zechariah decided to choose the name John which was the name God had wanted for his son, rather than his own name, Zachariah's life immediately stabilised once again. Zachariah chose God's will, rather than his own, and "Immediately his mouth was opened, his tongue freed and he spoke praising God" (Luke 1:64). When deciding to choose God's will good things began to happen. Zechariah immediately regained his voice and realised that God's will was always the better option.

We too are called, daily, to be open to God's providence in our lives. In that way, we "will receive blessings from the Lord, and justice from their [our] saving God" (Psalm 24:5). I know in my life when choosing to follow my own selfish plans it leads me into a road of chaos. I become lost and enter into a vicious cycle of "torture" that I can't seem to get out of. It seems dark and grim because I can't see a way out. However, when I begin to slowly follow God's path, I begin to surface once again, onto a smoother road that feels like a better fit for my life.

Yes, it is not always easy to see God's plan for our lives, but we must remain steadfast in prayer to better tap into the heart of God to link His will with our lives. Amen.



**Reflection written by: Adam Morales, St. Augustine's, Gateshead**



## Fourth Week of Advent

# Saturday 24th December 2022

Reading 1, 2 Samuel 7: 1-5, 8-12, 14-16; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 88:2-5, 27, 29;

Gospel, Luke 1: 67-79

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Today's Gospel at Mass is the 'Benedictus' – the Canticle of Zechariah, who sings in prophecy that his son, John the Baptist, will prepare the way for the Lord. Today is the only day in the year when this canticle is prayed twice: in Morning Prayer as it is prayed every day, and in the gospel of the final Mass of Advent on Christmas Eve morning.

Christmas Eve prays that the morning star, the radiance of eternal light, the sun of justice, will come and enlighten those who live in darkness and in the shadow of death. These last hours of Advent glimmer with Our Lord's approaching birth. The coming of Jesus stirs excitement in us as we see look for the breaking of his dawn.

Staring into the middle-distance between Advent and Christmas, we catch a glimpse of a refugee family seeking shelter. Their hard journey carries the kernel of salvation, wrapped in the flesh of the mother. Her breaking will spill into her arms the morning star, the one who brings light to those in darkness in every age and place.



**Reflection written by: Monsignor Andrew Faley**  
**Episcopal Vicar for the Vicariate for Faith & Mission**

# Christmas Day

## Sunday 25th December 2022

Reading 1, Isaiah 52: 7-10; Responsorial Psalm, Psalm 97: 1, 2-6;

Reading 2, Hebrews 1: 1-6; Gospel John 1:1-5, 9-14

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A Faberge egg, a Ferrari sports car, a Rolex watch. Don't worry this is not my letter to Santa Claus. The things I mention are examples of how the creativity of women and men can produce some remarkable things. As I prepare to celebrate Christmas I know I will not be receiving any of those things but I will receive something very special indeed, more special than those three things and, indeed, any other. In the Mass of Christmas Day we hear from the Gospel of John where we are told "not one thing had its being but through him." (Jn1:3)

While a gift received from an earthly creator is a wonderful thing, the gifts given by our divine creator make even the most magnificent of human creations pale. This beautiful planet created by God as a gift to all humanity, the gift of individual life given to each of us, the blessings of his gifts from heaven – what can be more precious, more glorious than these? I humbly suggest there is one thing greater than these – that is the gift of our sharing with others the gifts God has given to us. While we cannot improve on what God gives, our sharing of those God given gifts adds to the blessings which our world and its peoples need.

On Christmas Day, as we celebrate the birth of Christ, we are reminded that Jesus is saviour of the world – not just my saviour but saviour of all that has its being through him. This glorious day comes in the midst of difficult days for so many in our world, so let us hold fast to the hope that he brings but let us not cling to the gifts he shares with us but share them with the world, with the refugee, the displaced, the lonely, the cold, the hungry. Let us show the world this Christmas the joy and hope our Saviour and his followers bring.

We keep Bishop Robert in our prayers and wish him a blessed Christmas. I wish you a joy filled Christmas. God bless us one and all.



**Reflection written by: Fr Adrian Tuckwell, Episcopal Vicar for Caritas  
Hexham and Newcastle**





# Blue Christmas Resources

Christmas can be a difficult time for many people for all sorts of reasons – bereavement, unemployment, being far away from family – and so on. A Blue Christmas liturgy offers a way of acknowledging that – and, hopefully, finding the hope that will help them to get through Christmas.

**On the Diocesan website, there are three liturgies that can be used by an individual or within a group.**

**Cloth for the Cradle** – takes the idea of having strips of cloth on which then form part of a “blanket” into which the Christ-child image can be laid – in amongst the sorrows of life that he came into the world to be part of.

**Kindling Lights of Hope** – reminds us that God created light and walks with us through the dark times in our lives.

**Palm of God's Hand** – focusing on the reading from Isaiah 49 where God speaks of his tenderness for his people – whose names are written on the palm of his hand.

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## Emmaus Bereavement Listening Service

**Christmas is a season for kindness, a time to offer a fresh message of hope.**

If you are struggling after the death of a loved one, or suffering any significant loss, and would like to share your story with someone outside your family, then a member of the Emmaus Team may be able to help.

The members of the Emmaus Team are trained in bereavement listening skills and are experienced in supporting those who are suffering loss. If you think we could help, please call the Emmaus Bereavement Support Team, leaving your name and number and a member of the team will get in touch with you.

**Contact the Emmaus Bereavement Support Team on 07732 980740.**

"Blessed are those who  
mourn, for they shall be  
comforted"

Matthew 5:3





DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**  
— VICARIATE FOR FAITH & MISSION —

*With sincere thanks to everyone who has contributed to these wonderful Reflections throughout the Season of Advent.*

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