



e-Good News *The Gospel Of Mark*

We begin another new Church year with the season of Advent. The season is full of joy and looks forward to the coming of the Lord. "Advent" means coming, firstly Christ's coming as a human being in Bethlehem, secondly his coming into the hearts and minds of all believers on a daily basis and finally his coming in glory at the end of time.



This year throughout the Church and in our diocese we concentrate on the Gospel of Mark. The first sentence used by Mark declares that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ and that the Son of God is good news for all of us. We have much to rejoice for in our relationship with Christ. The third Sunday of Advent is sometimes referred to as Gaudate Sunday - or rejoicing Sunday.

In the ordinariness of our lives we are invited as believers to bring joy to all those we encounter. Through this season of Advent, let us take time to renew our relationship with the child of the stable who later was mighty in word and in deed. The good news of this relationship cannot be kept to ourselves. We are invited to announce it to others. During this season as we nurture our understanding of who Jesus is, let us try to bring this message of joy to those people who may no longer know the reason for the season.

We are inviting everyone to use this year's E-Good News to pray and prepare. We invite you to add this e-zine to your notice board, website, facebook page and in doing so we place the word of Lord at the service of all.

Marantha – come Lord Jesus come.

In the ordinariness of our lives we are invited as believers to bring joy to all those we encounter.



First Sunday of Advent - 27 November 2011

MARK 13:33-37 "STAY AWAKE!"



Beware, be alert, for you do not know when the time will come.

Our excerpt comes from the very last section, inculcating certain attitudes *for now*. It thus takes up the themes of Christ the King and opens the season of Advent, with a tone of preparation, expectation, and hope.

Being ready means living in the present. We can live in regret or fears. The Christian way is in the present. Only the present is real.

St. Paul says that God will keep us steady in love. We are signed with the cross at birth – the badge of the Christian. We could say we wear the tattoo of God, like he shows the wounds in his hands and side!

You meet a peaceful elderly person in the hospice - rooted in God. Someone who hasn't as much in life as others and it doesn't seem to matter. God and love and self-esteem keep them steady. Anything to do with God, with love, with depth in life comes slowly.

God grows roots in us. We walk and wait together with Jesus our Lord. We wait together ready for his coming.

Waiting in Advent is like being awake - to God and to others. To love where we find it, and to the need for love, and active care. Maybe we might do something extra - prayer, or help someone in need, and let Christmas be a happy one for someone else because of you.



Pointers For Prayer

- 1 The coming of the Master is not just the moment of death, but any moment of grace. Recall unexpected graces - good things that happened when they were not anticipated.
- 2 Times when you were particularly alert and aware of what was going on in you and around you and the contrast with moments when that alertness and awareness was not present.
- 3 The servants were given charge of the household 'each with their own job'. Identify with the servants as people given a responsibility within the household of God's people. What has it been like for you when you have been shown trust in this way by another person? What is it like for you to see yourself trusted in this way by God?
- 4 Your experience of good 'doorkeepers', people who were there and ready to receive you even when you came at an awkward or unexpected time. Also your experience of being a good 'doorkeeper' for another.
- 5 Jesus says that what he is saying to his disciples he is saying to all. Have there been times when you have been a messenger of hope to others, encouraging them to wait for a moment of grace. Who have been the ones to encourage you?

Prayer

REND the heavens and come down,
O God of all the ages!
Rouse us from sleep,
deliver us from our heedless ways,
and form us into a watchful people,
that, at the advent of your Son,
he may find us doing what is right,
mindful of all you command.

Grant this through him, whose coming is certain,
whose day draws near,
your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the
Holy Spirit,
God for ever and ever. Amen.





Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.

All beginnings are important and this is true in a special way for the four Gospels, all of which begin in their own particular way. Matthew opens with the genealogy of Jesus, reflecting his interest in the continuity with the Judaism. Luke writes as a historian and offers us the principles and motives behind his research. John makes the most remarkable opening, which echoes the very first words of the Gospel. In this Gospel, the opening sentence functions as a *title*, an *introduction* and a *plan* of the Gospel.

It is also the case that each of the Gospels makes a special effort to locate John the Baptist and his ministry as *preparatory* for the coming of Jesus. Throughout the first century there were followers of John the Baptist who gave rise to some anxiety in the Christian movement. It was always possible for the continuing Baptist movement to declare its superiority over Christianity because (a) John was Jesus' mentor and (b) John baptised Jesus. In a word, the one who has gives to the one who had not! For these reasons, the Gospel writers go to some trouble to make sure the reader spots the relative inferiority of John the Baptist in relation to Jesus the Messiah. For us today this is a battle long past but nevertheless it does help explain features of the text as we have it.

Prepare a way for the Lord

In the stresses of our times, we could become people of fear - because of redundancies, financial difficulties, relationships and so on. We can be afraid of the future for our children, and of our old age. Fear is like the wilderness. The first reading is a message of hope, for people who are a bit lost. Telling them they may feel lost but there is hope. This hope can be found in God.

Colour is Dark

Sometime we can be a bit lost, but you know there is light. Some can sing on a day of gloom, and then they see flowers in the wilderness where others see only rocks.

What sort of God? The one who is like a shepherd with the sheep in the arms. Close, protecting, guiding. Not unfortunately promising much else. God is all I have, someone said at the death of her husband, and she meant it. He is the shepherd with the lambs in his arms. The essential quality of God is loving forgiveness, forgiving healing love.

Who is God?

God can be the opposite for many. A small tiny tea-cup God blaming us for small faults and not forgiving big ones. Or the punishing God - remembering something wrong years ago and never letting it go.

We are pilgrims for this time of year with God who walks with us in our wilderness and desert. God wants to walk our journey with us. He is the pilgrim God who has left heaven to walk with his people.

Pointers For Prayer

- 1 John the Baptist is presented as a messenger to prepare the way for Jesus. Who have been messengers to you, preparing the way for the Lord?
- 2 To whom have you been such a messenger? The voice cries in "the desert" or wilderness...a reminder to us that when we feel that we are in a desert place in our lives, we should not give up hope. It may be that God's grace will come to us at any moment. Have you had an experience of God's grace coming to you when you were in a desert place?
- 3 John calls the people to repentance (= a change of heart), as a way to a new life. Can you recall times when you had a change of heart, and the change led to new life for you?
- 4 John baptised people with water as a gesture to mark their change of heart. Sometimes we perform an action to symbolise our change of heart - write a letter, throw away our last cigarettes, etc. Can you remember a symbolic gesture with which you marked a change of heart?
- 5 John did not claim to be greater than he was and freely acknowledged the greater role that Jesus would play. When have you seen yourself, or others, act with that kind of humility, freely acknowledging the place of God and of others in what is happening? What difference does it make to you when you are comfortable with your own important, but limited, worth?

Prayer

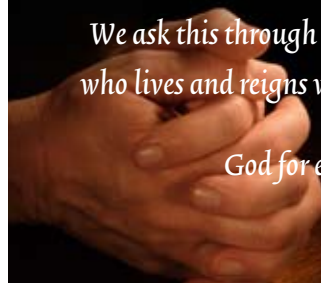
GOD OF POWER AND MERCY,

open our hearts in welcome.

Remove the things that hinder us from receiving Christ
with joy,
that we may share his wisdom and become one with him
when he comes in glory.

We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit,

God for ever and ever. Amen





Third Sunday Of Advent - 11 December 2011

JOHN 1:6-8, 19-28 JOHN THE BAPTIST: THE VOICE TO THE WORD

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.

The community of the Fourth Gospel came from different backgrounds: followers of John the Baptist, Samaritans, Gentiles and Pharisees. Because of the continuing existence of disciples of John, the anxiety vis-à-vis the Baptist is even more heightened.

Who are you?

A question often asked to Jesus. There are many answers - he is love, mercy, friend, brother.. Lovely words and true. But sometimes the answer will be not so easy. Whatever you do for the poor, the lonely, the hungry and anyone in need you do for me. I am especially close to them.

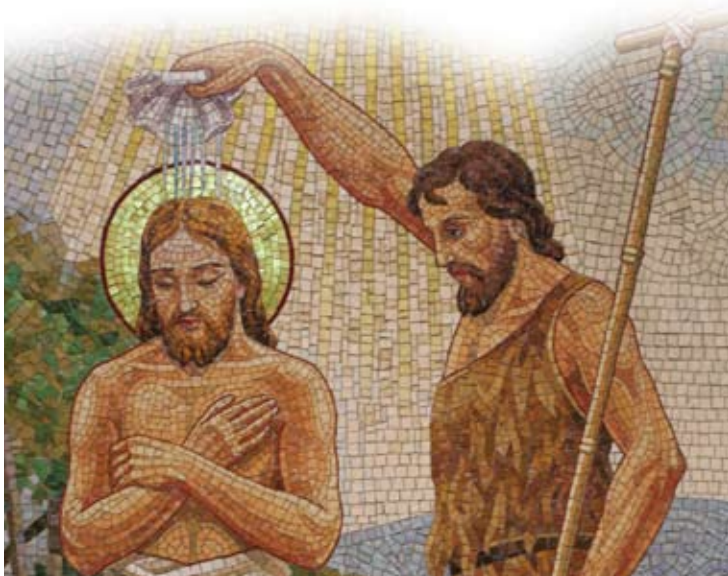
Somehow or other, he lives in all of us. We are immersed in the mystery we call God. All human life is in God and every human being.

The collection for the Society of St Vincent de Paul takes place in many parishes today. The demands on them are huge. What can I give today?

Why give?

Because all are our brothers and sisters. They have the right to justice. The house we build for someone in Africa is their right; the shelter we give to the homeless in Dublin is their right. Education, medical care are the duty of the state to provide and the right of us all.

None of us caused the problem of need and poverty - but we can all be part of the solution. By volunteer work, donations, prayer, political activity and genuine friendship on behalf of the poor and with them. With Christ we welcome them and all in need - He is among us and we do not see him.



Pointers For Prayer

- 1 John the Baptist came to bear witness to Jesus. Who have been the people who have borne witness to you of the good news of the Gospel that God loves you - a friend, a parent, a teacher, etc.? To whom have you borne that witness?
- 2 John appears in the story as one who had the courage to be himself in the face of loud and aggressive people. He was also a person who knew his own value, did not make exaggerated claims and was content with his mission. Can you recall times when you have been able to be yourself, even in the face of criticism from others?
- 3 John was "the voice of one crying out in the wilderness" - announcing confidently to those in the wilderness that they must not despair because God's grace will come to them at any moment. Have you had the experience of being in the wilderness, feeling lost? From whom did you hear a voice that gave you hope? Have you been able to give hope to other people when they were in the wilderness?
- 4 The priests and Levites challenged John the Baptist on his authority for speaking as he did and tried to put a label on him so that they could more easily dismiss what he had to say. When were you open to accept a truth from a person whom you had previously dismissed as having nothing to say to you?

Prayer

O GOD, most high and most near,
you send glad tidings to the lowly,
you hide not your face from the poor;
those who well in darkness you call into the light.

Take away our blindness,
remove the hardness of our hearts,
and form us into a humble people,
that, at the advent of your Son,
we may recognise him in our midst
and joy in his saving presence.
This prayer we make through him
whose coming is certain, whose day draws near,
your Son, Jesus Christ, who lives and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
God, forever and ever. Amen.





Let it be according to your word.

The Annunciation to Mary is unique to Luke's Gospel. Three of the Gospels enjoy a kind of prologue, Luke 1-2, Matthew 1-2 and John 1. All three are explorations of the Christ event, in an attempt to bring out a deeper understanding of "what happened" for humanity of the incarnation.

An Angel Visits Joseph

When we think of the 'annunciation', we think of the angel visiting Mary; in this story today we have the annunciation to Joseph. He was not left out of the plan of God. Like Mary he was afraid, and like Mary he needed the affirmation of God that her child would be the one promised, Emmanuel – God with us.

An angel in the Gospel is usually a messenger of God, to comfort as with Jesus later in the Agony in the garden, or to make God's call. God deals personally with us – his presence to Joseph was felt and remembered in a dream. He knew that God had visited him and was asking something of him for the mission of the son of God.

We are Emmanuel

It is the same for each of us. We are visited by God in different ways, called in his service. In the moments of prayer when we feel moved by the grace and love of God, and in the needs and cry of those in need around us. And in the call to love at all times. We are called, each of us, young and old, to be 'Emmanuel', that through each of us, God is with his people.

We are attentive to this 'angel' of God at Christmas. Maybe we notice the needs of others more, and maybe we appreciate those near us more. The Christmas events of this week can remind us of the real mystery of Christmas – that God is near, among us, and within us. In our treatment of others in ordinary ways and in celebrations we can honour and respect the God within each of us.

Joseph knew through the visit of the angel that God was near him in his wife; he knew that he had a big role to play in bringing Jesus to the world. He was a man of great faith.

Archdiocese of Dublin



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Pointers For Prayer

- 1 "Greetings, favoured one. The Lord is with you". We are all favoured ones and God is with us. Sometimes we are more aware of this than others. How have you experienced being a favoured person, one blessed by God? How have you experienced God's presence? Who has been Gabriel to you a messenger of good news?
- 2 "Do not be afraid." Mary was perplexed by the words of the angel. Perhaps you too have sometimes been perplexed by life's path and wondered what it all meant. Perhaps at times you have doubted if God was really with you. In your troubled moments who has been an 'angel' helping to lower your anxiety?
- 3 The angel told Mary that it was through her fruitfulness that she would realise the truth of the greeting. New life would come into being through her, and it would be through the Spirit of God working in her. How and where have you experienced yourself as a source of life for others? Have you at times had the sense that the Spirit of God was at work in you?
- 4 Mary was taken by surprise by the invitation, but she did not tell the angel she was not ready, nor ask him to return later. She was prepared to go with the invitation even though it was not the "right moment". "Here I am Lord". What invitations have come to you at the "wrong time" and how have you responded.
- 5 Mary's response serves as a model for us - as one saying 'yes' to what life offers. What is it like for you to say 'yes' to life? Perhaps at this moment in your life you are being invited to say "Here I am, Lord" ?

Prayer

HERE IN OUR MIDST, O God of mystery,
you disclose the secret hidden for countless ages.

For you we wait; for you we listen.

Upon hearing your voice
may we, like Mary, embrace your will
and become a dwelling for your Word.

This prayer we make through him
whose coming is certain,
whose day draws near, your Son, Jesus Christ,
who lives and reigns with you in the unity of the Holy
Spirit, God,
for ever and ever. Amen.

