



WE LONG
FOR YOU,
LORD.



Advent Program 2023
Catholic Diocese of Bunbury
Bunbury, Western Australia

Acknowledgment of Country

We acknowledge the traditional owners of the land on which gather, the Noongar people and their continuing connection to the land, waters and community. We pay our respect to all members of the Aboriginal communities and their cultures; and to Elders past, present and emerging.



Acknowledgments

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This publication is a collaboration between
Aaron Faure of the Office for Evangelisation,
and Rev Fr. Pierangelo C. Repuyan, PhD, Delegate to the Apostolic Administrator.

The original publication was developed by
Rev Fr Tony Chiera and Mrs Rebecca Ward to whom we give thanks.

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FOREWORD

Greetings of peace to all!

The Church reminds us that during the Season of Advent, we are entering a solemn period of expectant waiting for the commemoration of the Birth of Christ and at the same time, for the second coming of Jesus Christ (*parousia*). These two-fold rationales underpin the basis for the publication of this Advent Preparation Programme. Its purpose is specifically to assist parishioners embrace the spirit of Advent through full and active reflection on the Advent Gospel readings (Cf. *Sacrosanctum concilium*, no. 14). The four weeks of Advent are wonderful occasions to be deeply immersed into the mystery of the Incarnate Word of God and be inspired to take action by repenting and believing the Gospel (Mark 1:15).

In this Advent Season, we find ourselves in a very rare situation in the diocese of waiting expectantly for the announcement of our new Bishop, an experience that fits in well with the Advent themes of ‘waiting,’ ‘longing’ and ‘joyful anticipation.’

- We ‘wait’ because we believe in the apostolic succession originating from the appointment of the Twelve by Christ. This sacred tradition guarantees that the Good News about our salvation will continue be heard to the furthest ends of the earth (cf. Mt: 28:19).
- We ‘long’ because as we gather around the Table of the Lord, a chair is empty (*sede vacante*). The experience of not having our parents at our dining table for some reason makes us truly long for their company. It is just not the same when someone is not present.
- We ‘anticipate joyfully’ the appointment of our new Bishop because we believe in God’s will. Christ’s words, “I will be with you until the end of time” (Mt. 28:20), provide us the wonderful consolation that during this period of expectant waiting, we should not feel abandoned.

Reflectively, **we remind ourselves that though a chair empty, it is not the only chair around the table.** When we gather around for our Advent Preparation Programme gathering, let us remind ourselves that every single person present is a blessing and through them, others will be blessed.

Have a meaningful journey through this Advent Season. God’s blessing to you all.



Rev Fr Pierre Repuyan, PhD
Delegate to the Apostolic Administrator

WELCOME

Dear sisters and brothers,

Our faith is one that lives and breathes and moves. As we enter the Season of Advent we enter into a time of waiting and preparation. We are also in a unique time in the life of our Diocese as we also wait and prepare for a new Bishop.

It is important to recognise that even as our Church waits and prepares it also continues to live, breathe and move forward towards what is to come. What a blessing it is that these two seasons coincide and allow us to enter more deeply into these times of transition!

The whole Church is also going through a particular time of renewal. Pope Francis calls us to become a more synodal church. This is reflected through our own experience of the Diocesan Synod, the Plenary Council of Australia and the current international Synod on Synodality in Rome. During this Advent we especially hold in prayer, reflection and discernment the fruits of Synod in Rome and the recently released Synthesis Report.

At its heart synodality is about walking together. It is more than just a solution to the challenges the Church faces. The call to synodality is a call to renew the way our Church and faith lives, breathes, moves.

The 2024 Advent Program seeks to follow Pope Francis' call. You will find the addition of 'Spiritual Conversations' in this Advent Program. This process is a practice of synodality. This practice hopes to draw us together and walk together with and towards Jesus. Synodality will take time and practice.

We invite everyone to take time and practice synodality this Advent Season. We hope the 2024 Advent Program is a valuable companion as you live, breathe and move through this wonderful season.



Aaron Faure
Diocesan Evangelisation Coordinator

THE STEPS

The following steps are recommended to get the most out of the Advent Program. 1 ½ - 2 hours are a good length of time for each week. If the group thinks more time is needed on a section, then adjust the session to suit the needs of the group. Although there is a recommended time, this is only a guideline, and the group is free to decide how much or how little time should be spent. You may find that the amount of time spent in discussion changes from week to week. You may like to nominate someone each week to keep time and ensure the smooth running of the program.

1. Gathering together

Welcome everyone, ask them to make themselves comfortable, and then suggest they pause in silence before the Lord's presence. You may like to select and listen to a meditative piece of music or to an appropriate hymn for Advent. Then, pray together the opening prayer for the week. (In the first week, allow a little extra time for group members to read the introduction to the program.)

2. Opening the Scriptures

Read the *Opening the Scriptures* section which provides contextual understanding of the Scripture.

3. Reading the Gospel

The Gospel reading can be read directly from this program, or from a Missal if preferred. Allow some silent time at the end of the reading for group members to reflect on what they have heard.

4. Spiritual Conversations

Conduct a Spiritual Conversation as outlined below. Spiritual Conversations are a synodal practice that has been developed from our 2022 Plenary Council. It also allows us to follow Pope Francis' call to become a more synodal Church. During this step you may like to keep a journal to write down their own personal reflections as you will not be able to share everything you reflect and pray on.

5. Pray the Intercessions together

6. Prayer for the Appointment of our new Bishop

7. Conclude with the closing prayer

8. Call to Action

After the prayer, organise anything that needs to be done for the next Advent Group gathering, e.g., readers, perhaps tea/coffee break, social time, etc.

9. Living Advent Practice for the Week

These are suggestions on how you might practice the Advent theme in everyday life as discussed each week. Our faith is a living faith and we are called to be missionary disciples everywhere we go and in everything we do. We encourage everyone to practice at least one of these suggestions before your next meeting and share with other members how you accomplished this and how it made a difference to your week. This might be done in the gathering step or the tea break/social time.

Feedback and Review

Once you have completed the program, your feedback and review would be deeply appreciated. This will help us gather data and information for continual improvement of the program and of other programs throughout the year. You can provide feedback by following the link below.

Laity: <https://forms.gle/EcW6iGEnZ2LfixdV8>

Clergy: <https://forms.gle/YmcrE3pfZMrQpF1Y8>

SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

Step 1 – Gathering

- Bring everyone together.
- Ensure everyone introduces themselves (if they do not already know each other) for 1 or two minutes.
- Then as a group and as individuals prepare to enter the Spiritual Conversation.

Step 2 – Reflection

- Read the Scripture
- Pause for silence
- Read the Scripture again

Step 3 – Silent Prayer Reflection

- During this step everyone pauses in silence for individual prayer and reflection.
- It is a time for group members to collect their thoughts and try to discern what the Holy Spirit may be saying to them.
- A minimum of 3 minutes should be given to this and can be longer if appropriate.

Step 4 – Sharing

- During this step everyone shares using this starting sentence, “In my reflection today.....”
- Everyone should be given a chance to speak without any interruption. No responses should be made to what anyone says at this time.
- No one should speak more than 3 minutes and a timer should be used to ensure everyone has equal time.
- Speakers should work in a clockwise direction.
- Once everyone has spoken the group should pause for prayer and reflection.

Step 5 – Listening

- During this step everyone shares what they heard in the voice of the group. What struck me as I listened to the others? What did I hear and feel? What was the Spirit saying through this group?
- Each person should begin saying, “In the group I heard ... and it left me feeling...”
- They should not just restate or continue their points from the previous step.
- Everyone should be given a chance to speak without any interruption. No responses should be made to what anyone says at this time.
- No one should speak more than 2 minutes and a timer should be used to ensure everyone has equal time.
- Speakers should work in a clockwise direction.
- Once everyone has spoken the group should pause for prayer and reflection.

Step 6 – Free Flow Conversations

- It is now time for free-flowing conversation.
- There is no speaking order or time limits.
- It is a time to clarify, ask questions and respond. If possible there may a way to gain some consensus or identify areas of tensions.
- Try to summarise the discussion if possible.
- Once the conversation has finished conclude with a prayer.

FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Opening Prayer

Father in heaven,
our hearts desire the warmth of your love,
and our minds are searching for the light of your Word.
Increase our longing for Christ our Saviour
and give us the strength to grow in love,
that the dawn of his coming may find us rejoicing in his presence
and welcoming the light of his truth.
We ask this in the name of our Lord.
Amen.

Opening the Scriptures

We begin Advent in Year B by going to chapter 13 towards the end of Mark's Gospel. Jesus is on the Mount of Olives, looking across the valley toward Jerusalem and its Temple. He speaks to his disciples about the future destruction of the Temple, the end of the world and the coming of the Son of Man at the end of times.

In our Gospel passage this Sunday, Jesus calls his disciples and listeners to 'stay awake'. In fact in a few short verses Jesus mentions this call four times! It is a call to be vigilant, prepared and attentive to the presence and coming of the Lord at any moment; to be awake for the Lord's presence in our lives.

To illustrate his point Jesus tells a short parable about a travelling homeowner and his servants. While the master is away each servant has their own work to perform; but it is the doorkeeper who is especially singled out. The doorkeeper must watch for the return of the 'lord of the house', and be prepared to open the door for their lord whenever he returns.

Jesus concludes: 'What I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

Stay awake that you may recognise the Lord's coming and respond with an open heart and love.

Gospel Reading (Mark 13:33-37)

Stay awake! You never know when the Lord will come.

Jesus said to his disciples: 'Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man travelling abroad: he has gone from home, and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the doorkeeper to stay awake. So stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Stay awake!'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Begin a Spiritual Conversation

Use the steps on page 7 and the Scripture and reflection questions from this week.

Questions for Reflection

These questions are for personal reflection and prayer and are also a prompt for Spiritual Conversations. You do not need to share your answers to every question. You may like to journal some answers as well. You should only share your key insights from the reflection during the Spiritual Conversations to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share.

1. What does being awake and on guard mean for us? What are some examples?
2. How have we been asleep and inattentive in our everyday life?

3. In what ways can we stay awake to the presence of God in our everyday life?
4. What are some of the challenges faced today in being awake and attentive to the presence of God in our everyday life?
5. How do we as missionary disciples help each other to be on guard and stay awake? What can we do to help the people of our parish to do this?
6. What are some of your experience of being awake to the presence of God? How did this experience leave you feeling?
7. What task might the Lord be leaving you with this Advent?

Intercessions

Response: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Let us lift our voices in prayer and raise our heads in hope to the Lord who is our Saviour.

1. For the Church, that in the face of distress and anxiety, it may steadfastly proclaim the sure and certain hope of God's promised redemption. ***Response***
2. For the world, that among nations made desolate by conflict and violence, justice and righteousness may flower anew. ***Response***
3. For those who are apprehensive about the cares of life, that the disciples of Jesus may bring them words of hope and deeds of love. ***Response***
4. For all upon whom advanced age or failing health brings fear, that they may be given the care necessary to live in safety and security. ***Response***
5. For all who work for social justice, that they may know that their work brings God's promises to fulfilment. ***Response***
6. For our parish community, that the Lord may grant us abounding love for one another and so prepare us to stand before Christ who will come in glory. ***Response***

Pause for participants to offer personal intentions out loud.

Leader: We offer these prayers through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

Prayer for the Appointment of our new Bishop

Shepherding God, you reveal your way of unfailing love in the image of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost, shows compassion, knows and is known by the sheep and lays down his life for them.

We, your people of Bunbury Diocese, are without a bishop to shepherd us.

We ask that your Holy Spirit, who moves through this great south land, inspire the choice of our new Bishop, empower his 'yes' and open our hearts in hospitality and love. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: pray for us.
St Mary of the Cross MacKillop: pray for us.
St Patrick: pray for us.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.
All: May we recognise God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and be reconciled with those with whom we have been alienated.
All: May God help us to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

Leader: Let us be awake to the activity of God in our lives.
All: Lord, create in us an awareness of your presence.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.
All: Lord, be with us.

All: Jesus, help us prepare our hearts to meet you. We don't know when you will come again, but we do know that we see you daily in the face of every person we meet, especially in the faces of those in need. Amen

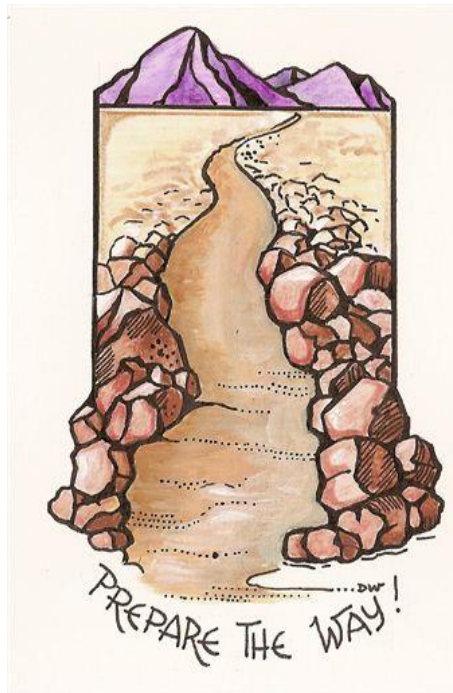
Living Advent: Practice for the week



How do you recognise the presence of Christ living in the people and world around you? What does Christ look like? Take action today to care for the Body of Christ, as he lives in the people around you.

Go out of your way to be kind to the strangers you may encounter. Stay awake, and be open to meeting Jesus in the homeless, poor and lonely.

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Opening Prayer

Father in heaven,
the day draws near when the glory of your Son
will make radiant the night of the waiting world.
May the lure of greed not impede us from the joy
which moves the hearts of those who seek him.
May the darkness not blind us to the vision of wisdom
which fills the minds of those who find him.
We ask this in the name of Jesus our Lord
Amen.

Opening the Scriptures

This Sunday's Gospel takes us to the very beginning of Mark's Gospel, where Mark introduces his account of the ministry, death and resurrection of Jesus. It is a rather abrupt beginning to the Gospel story, with no mention of the infancy of Jesus, and a sense of urgency pervades those opening verses.

The story of Jesus begins with the introduction onto the scene of John the Baptist. His coming is the fulfilment of ancient prophecies from Isaiah, Malachi and the Book of Exodus. God's faithful love and promises in the past are being fulfilled in

a special way now in the ministry of John the Baptist. He is 'Elijah', who was to return and announce the day of God's coming.

John prepares the way for the appearance of Jesus by preaching a 'baptism of repentance'. This external washing ritualised the interior forgiveness of sins.

The message of John was clear, stark and direct. Jesus is not far away. Now is the time to get ready. If you want to share in his Spirit, prepare yourselves. Seek a genuine and sincere change of heart.

Gospel Reading (Mark 1:1-8)

Make straight the paths of the Lord.

The beginning of the Good News about Jesus Christ, the Son of God. It is written in the book of the prophet Isaiah:

Look, I am going to send my messenger before you;
He will prepare your way.
A voice cries in the wilderness:
Prepare a way for the Lord,
Make his paths straight,

and so it was that John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. All Judaea and all the people of Jerusalem made their way to him, and as they were baptised by him in the river Jordan they confessed their sins. John wore a garment of camel-skin, and he lived on locusts and wild honey. In the course of his preaching he said, 'Someone is following me, someone who is more powerful than I am, and I am not fit to kneel down and undo the strap of his sandals. I have baptised you with water, but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit.'

The Gospel of the Lord.

Begin a Spiritual Conversation

Use the steps on page 7 and the scripture and reflection questions from this week.

Reflection Questions

These questions are for personal reflection and prayer and are a prompt for Spiritual Conversations. You do not need to share your answers to every question.

You may like to journal some answers as well. You should only share your key insights from the reflection during the Spiritual Conversations to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share.

1. Repentance is a radical change of mind and heart as well as a re-ordering of one's life. In what ways are you called to repent and have a genuine and sincere change of heart today? (This may be something that challenges you or makes you uncomfortable.)
2. What are the challenges you face in repenting and changing heart today?
3. How can we become a Church that both calls people to repentance and transformation and inspires, empowers and equip them to do so?
4. How can you respond to the call of John the Baptist and prepare for Jesus' coming into your life in new and unexpected ways?
5. In what ways do I need and/or use external rituals to reflect internal realities?

Intercessions

Response: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Praying with constant joy and filled with the compassion of Christ Jesus, let us offer intercession on behalf of all.

1. That the church may be a voice crying out in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord. *Response*
2. That those who govern nations may plant seeds of peace for a harvest of righteousness. *Response*
3. That worldly pride may be brought low and the earth's afflicted lifted up on the pathway of God's justice. *Response*
4. That those exiled from their homes by violence and terror may soon exchange the garments of sorrow for robes of rejoicing. *Response*
5. That our prayer and our presence here in this group may encourage the sick and homebound of our parish community. *Response*

6. That the One who began the good work of the gospel in us will carry it through to completion up to the day of Christ Jesus.

Response

Pause for participants to offer personal intentions out loud.

Leader: We offer these prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen.

Prayer for the Appointment of our new Bishop

Shepherding God, you reveal your way of unfailing love in the image of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost, shows compassion, knows and is known by the sheep and lays down his life for them.

We, your people of Bunbury Diocese, are without a bishop to shepherd us.

We ask that your Holy Spirit, who moves through this great south land, inspire the choice of our new Bishop, empower his 'yes' and open our hearts in hospitality and love. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: pray for us.

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop: pray for us.

St Patrick: pray for us.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.

All: May we recognise God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and be reconciled with those with whom we have been alienated.

All: May God help us to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

Leader: Let us be awake to the activity of God in our lives.

All: Lord, create in us an awareness of your presence.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.

All: Lord, be with us.

All: Prince of Peace, help us to be messengers of reconciliation to prepare the way for Jesus as John the Baptist did. Show us small ways to build peace in our family, community, and world. Amen.

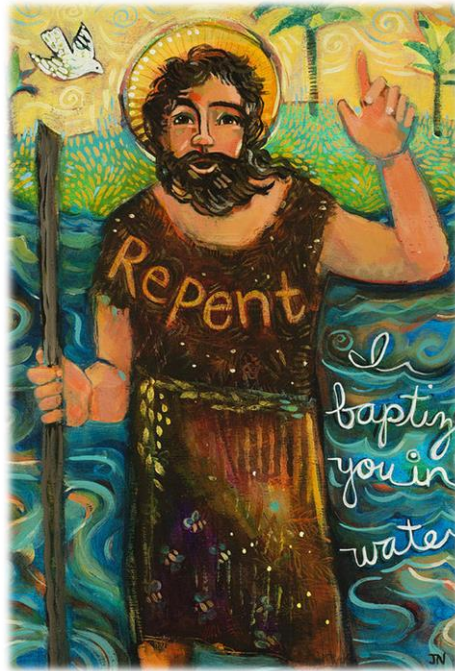
Living Advent: Practice for the week



At what moments in your life have you heard God's 'messengers'? Through what people, actions, events, challenges or prayers has God spoken to you? Think today about certain people in your life whom you tune out and have stopped listening to.

Consider how God may be calling you through them. Call someone today who you know needs to hear an encouraging word or to have an experience of friendship. Open your heart to them.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Opening Prayer

Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
ever faithful to your promises
and ever close to your Church:
the earth rejoices in hope of the Saviour's coming
and looks forward with longing
to his return at the end of time.
Prepare our hearts and remove the sadness
that hinders us from feeling the joy and hope
which his presence will bestow, for he is Lord for ever and ever.
Amen.

Opening the Scriptures

Midway through Advent we turn to the Gospel of John. It is 'Laetare Sunday', the Sunday of Joy. Christmas is near and a profound sense of joy echoes through this Sunday's readings. The Gospel today makes clear that John (the Baptist, but he is never referred to by this title in John's Gospel) is sent from God to 'testify' and give 'witness' to the Light. As John testifies to the Light, others will come to believe and have faith in Jesus the 'Light of the World'.

When some priests, Levites and teacher of the Jewish people are sent to question John about who he is, John is adamant. He is not the Messiah, he is not Elijah or the prophet to come. John wants to make sure that his role is not mistaken for that of Jesus. He is simply one crying in the desert urging people to prepare for the Lord's coming; and he is not even worthy to remove his Master's sandals.

John cleared a path for the coming of the anointed one, and ever since then 'the lives of believers have been the pathway through which the Messiah has entered the world' (Bergant).

Gospel Reading (John 1:6-8, 19-28)

There stands among you, unknown to you, the one who is coming after me.

A man came, sent by God.
His name was John.
He came as a witness,
as a witness to speak for the light,
so that everyone might believe through him.
He was not the light,
only a witness to speak for the light.

This is how John appeared as a witness. When the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, 'Who are you?' he not only declared, but he declared quite openly, 'I am not the Christ.' 'Well then,' they asked 'are you Elijah?' 'I am not' he said. 'Are you the Prophet?' He answered, 'No.' So they said to him, 'Who are you? We must take back an answer to those who sent us. What have you to say about yourself?' So John said, 'I am, as Isaiah prophesied:

a voice that cries in the wilderness:
Make a straight way for the Lord.'

Now these men had been sent by the Pharisees, and they put this further question to him, 'Why are you baptising if you are not the Christ, and not Elijah, and not the prophet?' John replied, 'I baptise with water; but there stands among you – unknown to you – the one who is coming after me; and I am not fit to undo his sandal-strap.' This happened at Bethany, on the far side of the Jordan, where John was baptising.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Begin a Spiritual Conversation

Use the steps on page 7 and the scripture and reflection questions from this week.

Questions for Reflection

These questions are for personal reflection and prayer and are also a prompt for Spiritual Conversations. You do not need to share your answers to every question. You may like to journal some answers as well. You should only share your key insights from the reflection during the Spiritual Conversations to ensure everyone has an equal opportunity to share.

1. How do you 'testify' and give 'witness' to Jesus in your everyday life?
2. Who are the people who have drawn you closer to Jesus? What was it about them that did so?
3. What are the challenges for you to give witness to Jesus in your everyday life? How might these be overcome?
4. John was a humble man who knew his mission, gifts and limitations. What does humility mean and look like today? How can we become more humble both in affirming our strengths and recognising our weaknesses?
5. Where do you see signs of the longing for God in our world?
6. How can we prepare ways for Jesus in our world today?

Intercessions

Response: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: With thanksgiving, let us make our prayers known to God who is always near.

1. For all those baptised in water and anointed with the Holy Spirit: May we serve the world by proclaiming the good news of the One who is coming. *Response*
2. For all those nations at war with one another: May they turn from conflict toward mutual and lasting respect. *Response*

3. For all in need of food or clothing, for those deprived of adequate housing and suitable employment: May these blessings soon be theirs. **Response**
4. For all those who are victims of greed, fraud and the abuse of power: May the judgement which the Messiah brings separate the wheat of integrity from the chaff of injustice. **Response**
5. For those in our community who will find the coming Christmas season a time of anxiety: May we support them with our prayers and assist them with our resources. **Response**
6. For this group gathered together to pray: May our gentleness and love be known to everyone. **Response**

Pause for participants to offer personal intentions out loud.

Leader: We offer these prayers through Christ our Lord.
All: Amen.

Prayer for the Appointment of our new Bishop

Shepherding God, you reveal your way of unfailing love in the image of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost, shows compassion, knows and is known by the sheep and lays down his life for them.

We, your people of Bunbury Diocese, are without a bishop to shepherd us.

We ask that your Holy Spirit, who moves through this great south land, inspire the choice of our new Bishop, empower his 'yes' and open our hearts in hospitality and love. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: pray for us.
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Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.
All: May we recognise God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and be reconciled with those with whom we have been alienated.

All: May God help us to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

Leader: Let us be awake to the activity of God in our lives.

All: Lord, create in us an awareness of your presence.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.

All: Lord, be with us.

All: God, fill us with the joy of Christ as we eagerly await his coming at Christmas. May the joy you bring inspire us to care for each other as we journey together as one human family. Amen.

Living Advent: Practice for the week



We often delay in our response to God calling us.

We resist being a witness for Christ in the world today.

This week, lean into and embrace your own vocation. Share your own insight of faith with someone else today.

FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT



Opening Prayer

Father, all powerful God,
your eternal Word took flesh on our earth
when the Virgin Mary placed her life at the service of your plan.
Lift our minds in watchful hope
to hear the voice which announces his glory
and open our minds to receive the Spirit
who prepares us for his coming.
We ask this through Christ our Lord.
Amen.

Opening the Scriptures

The Gospels for the fourth Sunday of Advent always tell of some event immediately preceding the birth of Jesus. This year (B), we turn to Luke's Gospel and the Annunciation to Mary by the angel Gabriel.

The announcement of the conception and birth of Jesus to Mary, signals that the long-awaited time of the Messiah's coming is at hand. God is finally fulfilling his plan and responding to the hope and longing of his people!

God chooses a young woman, making wedding plans in an insignificant little town in Galilee, to be the Mother of the Messiah. She, a virgin, will give birth to a son who is to be called 'Jesus' (God saves).

Mary is at first 'deeply disturbed' by the angel's greeting, not knowing what all this means. On hearing that this son she is to bear will play a central role in God's plan for the world, she questions 'how' this can happen as she is a virgin. The angel declares that she will be overshadowed by God's power and Spirit; and the conception will be God's doing. Finally, Mary embraces the 'impossible', with all the hardships it will entail, and accepts the will of God. With her acceptance the Word becomes flesh.

Mary accepts her mission; trusting in the strangeness of God's ways. And so, 'Christ is now in history...and in the womb of his people' (Romero).

Gospel Reading (Luke 1:26-38)

You will conceive and bear a son.

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.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Begin a Spiritual Conversation

Use the steps on page 7 and the scripture and reflection questions from this week.

Questions for Reflection

1. What 'disturbances' do I face today? What might God be calling me to through these 'disturbances'?
2. What 'yes' is God waiting for from me? How can I find the courage and obedience to give God this 'yes'?
3. What might God be able to achieve through me?
4. Mary embraced the 'impossible'; trusting in God's grace. What are some 'impossible' challenges we face as Christians, parishes and Church? How can we draw on the grace of God more deeply to face these challenges?
5. God choose a young woman to be the Mother of God. How can we build relationships of mutual support and learning with young adults and teenagers?

Intercessions

Response: Come, Lord Jesus!

Leader: Placing our trust in the Lord who provides for the needs of his flock, let us pray.

1. That the church, renouncing any desire for worldly power, may seek only to serve in the name of the Lord. **Response**
2. That all the nations of the earth, forsaking violence and vengeance, may greet one another as brothers and sisters. **Response**
3. That Christians may hasten to the aid of those who are in anguish of body, mind or spirit. **Response**
4. That those who await the birth of a child may delight in the mystery and miracle of childbirth. **Response**
5. That those who are travelling at this time of year may reach their destination safely and find refreshment and joy in the hospitality they receive. **Response**
6. That we who pray together may translate our prayers into a living witness of striving to do God's will. **Response**

Pause for participants to offer personal intentions out loud.

Leader: We offer these prayers through Christ our Lord.

All: Amen

Prayer for the Appointment of our new Bishop

Shepherding God, you reveal your way of unfailing love in the image of the Good Shepherd who seeks the lost, shows compassion, knows and is known by the sheep and lays down his life for them.

We, your people of Bunbury Diocese, are without a bishop to shepherd us.

We ask that your Holy Spirit, who moves through this great south land, inspire the choice of our new Bishop, empower his 'yes' and open our hearts in hospitality and love. We make this prayer through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Our Lady of Perpetual Help: pray for us

St Mary of the Cross MacKillop: pray for us.

St Patrick: pray for us.

Closing Prayer

Leader: Let us prepare to meet God in everyone we meet this Advent.

All: May we recognise God in all of them.

Leader: Let us be prepared to forgive and be reconciled with those with whom we have been alienated.

All: May God help us to forgive and to ask forgiveness.

Leader: Let us be awake to the activity of God in our lives.

All: Lord, create in us an awareness of your presence.

Leader: Let us be prepared for and open to new revelations from God in our lives.

All: Lord, be with us.

All: God of every nation and people, as we look at this Holy Family, we pray for all families: those we know, and those we do not, those who live on the other side of the world, and those who live on the other side of the street. Amen.

Living Advent: Practice for the week



In our final preparations for the Feast of Christmas, we recall that Mary herself was conceived with a perfect grace. We are called to say “yes” and to mean it with all our hearts.

Yes, I will bear Christ to this world.

When the phone rings and someone asks for a favour, or when the parish calls for help in various ministries, or when you see a need that you know you could meet, say “yes.”

Final Prayer

St. Augustine

Late have I loved You,
O Beauty ever ancient, ever new;
late have I loved You.
For behold you were within me,
and I outside;
You were with me,
and I was not with You.
You called and cried to me
to break open my deafness.
You sent forth your beams
and chased away my blindness.
I tasted You,
and now hunger and thirst for You.
You touched me,
and I have burned for Your peace.
You have made us for Yourself, O Lord,
and our hearts are restless
until they rest in You.



Adoration of the Shepherd by Matthias Stomer, 1632



2023

Catholic Diocese of Bunbury
Bunbury, Western Australia