

Weekly Newsletter During the Covid-19 Pandemic 29/11/ 2020

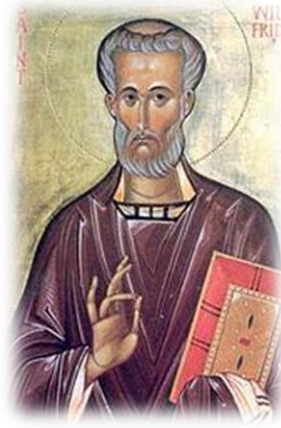
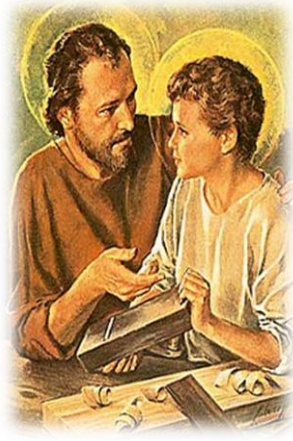
Joint Parishes of St Joseph's and St Wilfrid's Gateshead Parish

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First Sunday of Advent



Stay Awake!

Advent is a time of waiting and watching for the coming of the Lord Jesus. The Holy Spirit is our constant help so that we may always be alert and prepared for the last day. The best preparation is a life lived in the knowledge that God is our Father and we are the work of His hands.

On the first Sunday of Advent we light the candle of Hope

Reflection

Lord help me to spend at least as much time on preparing my heart and my soul to be ready and worthy to welcome you as I do on preparing my home to welcome those I love.

Today is the First Sunday of Advent

(OF) Readings for today are: -

First Reading	Isaiah 63:16-17:64:1,3-8
Responsorial Psalm	Psalm 79
Second Reading	1 Corinthians 1:3-9
Gospel	Mark 13:33-37

"Stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming"

Ever since our childhood the first Sunday in Advent brings a touch of excitement, Christmas is coming soon. Advent means coming, yet there is no mention of Christmas in Mass today. The birthday of Jesus is history. 2020 years ago. We count the years from his birth. There is no waiting for that coming. The Gospel today reminds us that he is coming back, and for that coming we have no date. Every Mass is a Christ Mass, remembering His death, celebrating His resurrection, and looking forward to his return in glory.

The Christian life is one long advent, preparing to meet Him when He comes again. The first friends of Jesus lived for that return. The very last word in the bible is "Maranatha" meaning "Come back Lord." They believed it would happen in their own lifetime. It would happen during the celebration of the Eucharist. "When we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim your death Lord Jesus, until you come again." Since however, he has not come back these last 2020 years, we today don't expect his return during our life time. They were wrong in thinking he would be back soon: we could be wrong in thinking he won't. The truth is that it COULD be anytime. "It is not for you to know," Jesus once said, so "Stay awake"

So we have these 2 Advent themes: *He came in History; He will come again in Majesty.* But there is a 3rd coming which is also very important, **He comes daily in mystery.** (History, Mystery, Majesty: his 3 Comings.)

Mystery does not mean unreal, or "hard to explain, or "airy fairy." Mysterion is a Greek word meaning "hidden unseen but real"

Our vocation as Christians is to make real this HIDDEN PRESENCE of Christ: Christ wants to come now into our world of today. We make him present by our daily lives of justice, and love.

Society can be very hostile to Christian teaching and to our values. Jesus tells us that he sends us out like lambs among wolves: and so he added "Be as wise as serpents, but as simple as doves." Be cunning and be gentle. We must speak the truth in love. We will meet opposition: but "be not afraid"

This is why Jesus tells us to stay awake. Stay awake means being aware of what is happening around us. How often in life have we missed some opportunity simply because we were unaware? We must love God with our whole mind and heart. Notice: Mind first.

That means reading the signs of the time, for the sake of the Kingdom.

So let's do just that.

Read the signs of the time we live in. Take an obvious sign of the times: our secular non religious Christmas. The shops on the high street advertise Christmas Cards, but where are they? Here is our chance to witness to Christ. Ask the shop assistant for genuine Christmas cards. Make sure that EVERY card we send mentions the birth of Jesus. See how many cards we receive with Seasons Greetings and robins and reindeers. No mention of why the season in the first place.

Display the crib at work, in doctors waiting rooms, hospital wards, shop windows , banks, building societies. Yes the Christmas tree, but the crib is more important. No one is offended by an image of a baby and his mother. Don't be put off if someone says, "but we have other customers besides you Christians". The Muslims and Jews often wonder why we Christians are so reticent at displaying our Faith in public. Rabbis and Imams have told us they are not offended. The Muslims honour Our Lady, the mother of a prophet..

We count the passing years from his birth. Some history books drop AD (anno Domini the year of the Lord) and put CE Common Era. A sign of the times; History teachers, please tell your students how we get the date. CE is the Christian era.

A more important reading of the signs of the time lies in the global collapse of the economy: resulting in insecurity: unemployment: repossession of homes: erosion of pensions. A sure sign, that we are a fallen race, in need of a Redeemer. A sure sign, that we neglect the Natural, Moral Law, of justice, and a fair distribution of wealth at our peril. A sure sign, that unethical economics is bad economics. Christians in finance, in medicine must speak out for the Moral Law.

He came 2020 years ago in history. He will come again in Majesty. Meanwhile we make him present by the goodness of our lives. . To live justly: to love tenderly and to walk humbly before God is to prepare this world for its transformation when he comes again'



Today is the First Sunday of Advent
(E) readings for today are: -

<i>Introit</i>	<i>Psalm 24:1-3</i>
<i>Epistle</i>	<i>Romans 13:11-14</i>
<i>Gradual</i>	<i>Psalm 24:3,4</i>
<i>Gospel</i>	<i>Luke 21:25-33</i>

"There will be signs"

As children we begin to get excited when Advent arrives, many of us will remember opening those little doors on the Advent calendar, each door we opened was a sign that Christmas was getting nearer. We were counting down the days with a holy picture and a short text from the Bible; that was enough to satisfy us. Unlike the more secular calendars of today where often a chocolate treat lies behind each door, no holy picture and certainly no Bible text to feed our Souls! As Catholic children we were satisfied with the door opening and could wait happily and patiently for the next day, often today, children, having consumed the chocolate treat, are greedy for more, one is never enough; a reflection of our greed for material things today, food for the Soul has taken a back seat.

As children Advent is an exciting time as the house begins to take on a new look with Christmas decorations, and perhaps music playing more often, bowls of snacks set out for guests, everything feels just that little bit more special. Advent was a time of expectation, anticipation, and excitement. Yes, it meant Jesus would be born in Bethlehem but it also meant grandparents, presents, and Santa Clause. We looked forward to the future one day at a time.

As adults we can still conjure up some of the excitement we remember from our childhood, especially if we are parents or grandparents sharing in the childlike anticipation with our little ones, but we know things have changed, that somewhere along the way our lives have become real and at times difficult. Suddenly, Advent has become a season of change, letting go, and looking to a future that is not yet clear or known. We cannot pinpoint exactly how or when things changed; we just know that they have. Our life experiences, the storms we face in our personal lives, sickness, bereavement, fear for loved ones, unemployment, and the storms we see all around us as news unfolds of natural disasters, wars, starvation, and disease. All of this shapes us; each little difficulty is a sign. We are living through our Advent, we can all tell stories of the moments in our lives when things changed forever, we have all lived through seasons of change, letting go, and stepping into an uncertain future, maybe even a future we did not want.

Wouldn't it be wonderful if Advent was as simple and easy as opening a little door on the calendar, eating a piece of chocolate, and knowing that Christmas is one day closer. But it's not; the world is not that simple and life is not that easy. Perhaps that's why every year on this day, the First Sunday of Advent, we always hear a gospel text (Luke 21:25-36) that seems to

describe the end of the world and the signs that will accompany that ending. This is our story, we experience it in our lives, and we see it in our world. And today the Church declares it to be the good news of Christ.

"There will be signs," Jesus said. More than ever our world needs to see the signs. Every Advent story is accompanied by signs. Jesus says if we look we'll see the signs everywhere; in the sun, the moon, the stars; in the distress among earth's nations; and in the roaring of the sea and its waves. We see the signs in our personal lives as we face difficulties which at the time they are occurring seem unbearable; we see the signs in the pictures of refugees and in the world's violence, they are everywhere and they are not hard to spot. They are, however, too easily and quickly misunderstood and misused.

"There will be signs" are words of hope and reassurance but far too often they are heard as words of warning and threat. And when they are, the signs are used to predict a future of impending doom and loss. They become indicators that the world will end and you better shape up or God is going to get you. Our misunderstanding of the signs pushes us further into the darkness and deeper into our fear. Our misuse of the signs blinds us to the coming of the Son of Man with power and great glory.

"There will be signs" are not Jesus' words of warning and threats. Jesus does not ask us to predict the future. He never says these are the signs that the end of the world has come. Instead, he says that when we see the signs we are to stand up, raise our heads, and know that help is on the way; our redemption, our healing, our Saviour have drawn near.

The signs are not a reason to hang our head in despair or shrink from life. That we can see the signs in our lives and world means that the circumstances we face and the events that happen contain and reveal the promise of Christ's coming. The signs are our hope and reassurance that God has not abandoned us, that God notices us that God cares, comes to, and participates in our life's circumstances.

Jesus' parable of the fig tree teaches us how to read the signs. The Advent signs are as ordinary and common as a fig tree sprouting leaves. We see the leaves and we know something is happening. Summer is already near. It's a new season, with new life, new growth, new fruit. That is the promise and good news of the Advent signs. And yet that promise, that good news, is fulfilled not apart from but in and through the reality of our life's circumstances and our world's events, no matter how difficult or tragic they may be.

So, what if we looked on our lives and our world and we began to read and understand the signs in our Advent stories as sprouting leaves? What would we see? What would it mean?

Yes, the Advent seasons of our lives can be long, difficult, and painful. But we never face those seasons without the signs of hope and reassurance, signs that point to the one who is coming.

"There will be signs," Jesus said.

Mass resumes next weekend.
5pm Saturday evening at St Wilfrid's. 10am, and Mid-day at St Joseph's.
Tuesday lunchtime Mass is returning from the 8th December.

Mass Intentions

Mass is offered Daily at approximately 10.00am in private, if you have any intentions please put these in an envelope and pop through the letter box, or place them on the collection plate.

Intentions this week:-

Sunday: People of the Parish
Monday: Holy Souls
Tuesday: Adrian Barnes
Wednesday: James Cawthorne
Thursday: Valerie, Catherine and John Wall
Friday: Holy Souls
Saturday: Harry and Mona Richardson
5pm: private Intention
Sunday: Margaret Duffy
Noon: People of the Parish

Please keep in your prayers the sick of the parish, and Fr Ian Hoskins who is seriously ill, all those who have recently died and for those whose anniversaries occur at this time.

Christmas Masses

Mass will be said on Christmas Eve at 5pm in English by Fr Paul Douthwaite at St Wilfrid's and at the same time in English at St Joseph's by Canon Michael.

Mass on Christmas morning will be in Latin at 10am in St Joseph's church

There will be no congregational singing of carols before or during any Mass due to the restrictions re COVID.

As numbers remain limited for attendance at Mass we are operating a Phone booking system, you must reserve a place, do not just turn up!

Telephone 07856943705

The information we will require is:-

Name, contact number, Mass you wish to attend, number of people in your family/bubble group accompanying you.

"Doors Wide Open" We have to keep doors fully open during Mass, in order to maintain proper ventilation to ward off any transmission of COVID. This will remain the case throughout the winter months, including Christmas time. We advise that you wear extra layers of clothing or bring a shawl/blanket with you to Mass.

Donations

If you would like to continue giving through direct debit, standing order or bank transfer, the details are below.

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
St Wilfrid's
Sort Code 40-34-18
Account Number 01164120

Diocese of Hexham and Newcastle
St Joseph's
Sort Code 40-34-18
Account Number 31164066

To donate via cheque please make out to
'DHN St Wilfrid's Gateshead' or 'DHN St Joseph's Gateshead'
These can be posted to the parish address

Please use the reference "Weekly Contribution" for collection money
"Loft Fund" for donations to improving choir loft
"Lourdes Garden" for contributions to the garden
"Parish Poor" for donations to help feed our homeless and hungry

Keeping Up to Date

Please keep our records up to date by ensuring Canon Michael holds your most recent contact information on file

If you are reading this and realise that you have not updated a recent change of address, telephone number or email address, please send an email to the parish with your updated information.

If you have recently moved into the parish and have not yet given us your details, please let us know your details by email.

You can keep yourself informed about Parish activities and more by following us on Social Media:
Face Book and Twitter
And by logging into the parish website and/or Blog

<https://stjosephstwilfridsgatesheadnewsblog.wordpress.com/>

<http://www.stjosephscatholicchurchgateshead.org.uk>

Please forward this newsletter to anybody you think may enjoy reading it.

If you know of someone who is not on the mailing list but would like to be please ask them to contact us via one of the above emails.

If you, or someone you know, would like to receive a slimmed down, edited paper version of the newsletter please let me know.

SENT ON BEHALF OF THE VICARIATE FOR FAITH AND MISSION

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 pandemic. A set of resources have been created by Clergy and Laity from across the diocese and are offered as a life-buoy, remedy and prayer book for the days ahead. It is hoped that as Parishes and Partnerships you may be able to print these resources out for those who do not have access to the internet.

Included in the resources are:

- **Daily video prayer reflections** compiled by the Youth Ministry Team and entitled 'Wait a minute it's Advent'. This resource is aimed at young people but I am sure will also appeal to a wider audience.
- **Weekly Advent packs** designed for those with and without the internet. With the hope that those with emails and internet might print them out and deliver them to their neighbours in paper form. These weekly packs include daily reflections on the readings alongside themed quotes from the Bible and Saints and an element of creativity for people stuck indoors. They will run through Advent and the Christmas Octave.
- **Weekly Advent videos** entitled "Advent in a Pandemic!" These four short Advent reflections are written with this year of disruption and fatigue in mind. They are aimed at parish volunteers, catechists and people looking for light in a darkened sky.
- **Additional Advent resources:** A document that signposts people to the many rich resources that are available online for Advent this year.

These resources are

available: <http://www.rcdhn.org.uk/faithandmission/prayeradventresources.php>

Are you thinking about running a prayer group during Advent? This is a sharing site that includes a folder of resources available online. It consists of poetry, prayers and liturgies that have been shared by experienced members of our Diocesan community. It also contains some training documents and safe-guarding documents for leading prayer groups via zoom. (A Microsoft Account is required and can be created at: <https://signup.live.com/signup>.)

To register for access to these resources: <https://mailchi.mp/31eaefdd5842/gaqf83ko8o>. (Complete the registration form and include your Microsoft Account).

Also coming soon is an offering from the **Diocesan Church Music Association**.

Wishing you and your loved ones a Happy Advent.

Mgr. Andrew Faley, and the Faith & Mission team.

Help protect babies with cleft lip, cleft palate and club foot

Sadly abortion is currently available in the UK, right up to birth, for babies with cleft lip, cleft palate and club foot. All of these conditions can be corrected. A cross-party group of MPs from the three largest parties in the UK Parliament have come together to bring forward the Abortion (Cleft lip, cleft palate and club foot) Bill. The Bill will change the law to clarify that cleft palate, cleft lip, and club foot are not grounds for abortion in the UK. Can you help with getting your MP to support the Bill? Please visit www.standupandsmile.org.uk to email your MP asking them to support the Bill. It only takes 30 seconds.

Compass in Advent ...preparing for Christmas

Our lives are being turned upside down at the moment due to Covid-19. You are invited to join this online conference to reflect on some of the characters in the Christmas story whose lives were also radically changed and to contemplate on "How is God speaking to us through these stories today?" Each Friday we will focus on one set of characters. The meeting will also include a sharing of a contemporary story of vocation/call. There will be time for sharing, questions and discussion.

Who? - Young adults 18-35

When? Fridays - 27th Nov, 4th, 11th, 18th Dec Time?

7pm for one hour

To obtain the Zoom link: please email **CompassInAd-vent@gmail.com** for the link and for any other information. Facebook event: <https://bit.ly/CompassInAdvent> [*Compass is a project of CVP (Catholic Vocations Project). CVP is supported by a group of religious women and men in the UK who are interested in promoting a culture of vocation in our Church.*]

Young Adult Essay Writing Competition

An essay competition on the theme 'The Future of Interreligious Dialogue' has been announced and is timed to mark the 50th anniversary of the WCC's Office of Interreligious Dialogue and Cooperation. The competition aims to encourage people under the age of 30 with interests in the field of interreligious relations and engagement to develop and share their ideas. The five best essays will be published in the 2021 issue of *Current Dialogue*, the WCC's journal for interreligious encounter. The deadline is 15th January 2021. For a list of subject themes, rules and word length visit www.ctbi.org.uk/essay-competition-future-of-interreligious-dialogue/

Masses Online

Two online services stream Masses throughout the day - www.churchservices.tv and www.mcnmedia.tv Other parishes stream live on YouTube - you just need to search for the parish name on YouTube to find them. You can also go to <https://mass-online.org> unfortunately, we have no live stream facilities at either St Wilfrid's or St Joseph's Churches.