

Fourth Sunday in Advent

Use some or all of this reflection to help guide your personal journey through this week of Advent

Reflect

Prepare to be “not ready”.

The events of the past week have shaken most of us. It is hard to write a Christmas card with words of joy, peace, or hope and wish folk a merry time.

We were not ready for this.

But isn't “this” exactly where God means to meet us?

Not where we are “ready” because the house is decorated, we've got the presents wrapped, the food prepared, the carols sung and we've done bit of praying for the world.

But in “this” place, which is uncertain, sometimes feels hopeless, and is devastatingly human and vulnerable; this is the place God entered as Mary accepted her role as a young woman carrying a child. This place, full of darkness and light; this is the place wherein John preached yet still asked “are you the Messiah?” This place where the disciples came to see their own reflected inadequacies perfectly loved into a new way of being.

This was where Jesus came and still comes.

Perhaps don't “be ready” this week.

Just be you, coming to Bethlehem, waiting, expanded, different.

Read

Isaiah 9: 2, 6, 7

²The people walking in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death,
a light has dawned.

⁶For unto us a child is born,
unto us a son is given,
and the government will be upon His shoulders.
And He will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷Of the increase of His government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on the throne of David
and over his kingdom,

to establish and sustain it
with justice and righteousness
from that time and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of Hosts will accomplish this.

Ponder

How can we live in 2025 with the sounds of carols in every store, tinsel and baubles in every venue, the rush and connections pulling at us, but also where we want to respond to the call that God is making upon our lives, a call that we know so truly begins with love and continues in the story of Christmas - of the incarnation of that love in a baby boy?

Do

In the many ways you will celebrate Christmas this year can you live true to everything that is about you and within you? As God became clothed in skin and bone, can you touch base with yourself about your being at this time -with the body's aches, the mind's scars and anxieties, the hungers, delights and sadnesses. Your soul's restlessness?

Can you wrap these things for Christmas this year?

Each day until Christmas and indeed after the day...how will you mark what is being revealed as you ponder Christmas this year.

- Read a prayer - perhaps even compose it yourself.
- Sing a song (see below... Nil Desperandum)
- Dance a little dance
- Sit with something beautiful from art, music, or nature
- Be still for a few moments, simply be-ing

Prayer

There is so much to say, to ask for.

Yet, nothing is quite right to say, to ask for.

Please pray in me, Creator and Lover of us and this bewildering world.

I look to the baby, who will become the fulcrum for our Hope, the Beacon of our Peace and the Source of our Love for me, for us, for the whole world.

Emmanuel. Come Lord Jesus.

Listen

Nil Desperandum by John O'Donohue and the Monks of Glenstal Abbey.

<https://youtu.be/-QpgI2HGYPQ?si=TwncyYUs8Swcry8M>

Listen to the voice of John O'Donohue speak about the power of singing and music to lift us from despair.

Veni, Veni Emmanuel sung by the Gesualdo Six

<https://youtu.be/MSRocN1dTrM?si=VbCJ0EqV239r-zLX>

Veni, veni, Emmanuel
captivum solve Israel,
qui gemit in exsilio,
privatus Dei Filio.

R: Gaude! Gaude! Emmanuel,
nascetur pro te Israel!

O come, O come, Emmanuel,
and ransom captive Israel
that mourns in lonely exile here
until the Son of God appear.
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
shall come to thee, O Israel!

Veni, O lesse virgula,
ex hostis tuos ungula,
de specu tuos tartari
educ et antro barathri.

O come, Thou Rod of Jesse's stem,
from ev'ry foe deliver them
that trust Thy mighty power to save,
and give them vict'ry o'er the grave.

Veni, veni O Oriens,
solare nos adveniens,
noctis depelle nebulas,
dirasque mortis tenebras.

O come, Thou Dayspring from on high,
and cheer us by thy drawing nigh;
disperse the gloomy clouds of night
and death's dark shadow put to flight.

Veni, Clavis Davidica,
regna reclude caelica,
fac iter tutum superum,
et claude vias inferum.

O come, Thou Key of David, come
and open wide our heav'nly home;
make safe the way that leads on high
that we no more have cause to sigh.

Chór Śląskiego Uniwersytetu Medycznego w Katowicach - Karl Jenkins "Cantate Domino"

<https://youtu.be/jNped2pBA4Q?si=TNqErzsonwpFaPbz>

Cantate Domino canticum novum:
cantate Domino omnis terra,
Cantate Domino et benedicite nomini
ejus:
annuntiate de die in diem salutare
ejus.
Annuntiate inter gentes gloriam ejus:
in omnibus populis mirabilia ejus.

Sing to the Lord a new song:
sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Sing to the Lord and bless his name:
proclaim his salvation every day
without end.
Tell his glory among the nations:
in every land tell his marvelous
deeds.

Silent Night – Carols from Kings

<https://youtu.be/POcDlbYiF9c?si=tW4XWsoPvnqW3d5S>

And for a gentle favourite.

Biggest ever live choir sings 'Love Is In The Air' (John Paul Young) in Brisbane

<https://youtu.be/gGjg29xp8Jw?si=XPpYwDDaD1flzNGK>

And just for a bit of delight in the joy of singing, the joy of being together at Christmas time and a message of love – we hope you enjoy this choir.