

Advent

A LITURGICAL INTRODUCTION TO THE SEASON

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation, as the Church prepares to celebrate the coming (*adventus*) of Christ in his incarnation, and also looks ahead to his final advent as judge at the end of time. The readings and liturgies not only direct us towards Christ's birth, they also challenge the modern reluctance to confront the theme of divine judgement:

*Every eye shall now behold him
robed in dreadful majesty.*

(Charles Wesley)

The Four Last Things – Death, Judgement, Heaven and Hell – have been traditional themes for Advent meditation. The characteristic note of Advent is therefore expectation, rather than penitence, although the character of the season is easily coloured by an analogy with Lent. The anticipation of Christmas under commercial pressure has also made it harder to sustain the appropriate sense of alert watchfulness, but the fundamental Advent prayer remains 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come' (1 Corinthians 16.22). Church decorations are simple and spare, and purple is the traditional liturgical colour. In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. The lighting of candles on an Advent wreath was imported into Britain from northern Europe in the nineteenth century, and is now a common practice. The Third Sunday of Advent was observed in medieval times as a splash of colour in the restrained atmosphere of Advent (Gaudete or 'Rose Sunday'), and the last days of Advent were marked by the sequence of Great 'O' Antiphons, which continue to inspire modern Advent hymns and meditations.

Holy Communion in Advent

The Gathering

Stand In the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit.

All **Amen.**

Words of welcome or introduction may be said.

THE GREETING

Grace, mercy and peace
from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ
be with you

All **and also with you.**

HYMN

Sit PRAYER OF PREPARATION

All Almighty God,
to whom all hearts are open,
all desires known,
and from whom no secrets are hidden:
cleanse the thoughts of our hearts
by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit,
that we may perfectly love you,
and worthily magnify your holy name;
through Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE LIGHTING OF THE ADVENT CANDLES

Advent 1 – The Patriarchs

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, God of our ancestors:
to you be praise and glory forever.

You called the patriarchs to live by the light of faith
and to journey in the hope of your promised fulfilment.

May we be obedient to your call
and be ready and watchful to receive your Christ,
a lamp to our feet and a light to our path;
for you are our light and our salvation.

All **Blessed be God forever.**

**Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
born in David's city of Bethlehem, born like him to be a king:
Be born in our hearts this Christmastide,
be king of our lives today.**

Advent 2 – The Prophets

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true:
to you be praise and glory forever.

Of old you spoke by the mouth of your prophets,
and in our days you speak through your Son,
whom you have appointed the heir of all things.

Grant us, your people, to walk in his light,
that we may be found ready and watching
when he comes again in glory and judgement;
for you are our light and our salvation.

All **Blessed be God forever.**

**Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
the prophets said you would bring peace and
save your people in trouble.**

**Give peace in our hearts at Christmastide,
and show all the world God's love.**

Advent 3 – John the Baptist

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, just and true:
to you be praise and glory forever.

Your prophet John the Baptist was witness to the truth
as a burning and shining light.

May we your servants rejoice in his light,
and so be led to witness to him
who is the Lord of our coming kingdom,
Jesus our Saviour and King of the ages.

All **Blessed be God forever.**

**Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
John told the People to prepare, for you were very near.
As Christmas grows closer day by day
help us to be ready to welcome you now.**

Advent 4 – The Virgin Mary

Blessed are you, Sovereign Lord, merciful and gentle:
to you be praise and glory forever.

Your light has shone in our darkened world
through the child-bearing of blessed Mary;
grant that we who have seen your glory
may daily be renewed in your image and
prepared like her for the coming of your Son,
who is the Lord and Saviour of all.

All **Blessed be God for ever.**

**Lord Jesus, Light of the world,
Blessed is Gabriel who brought good news.
Bless your church preparing for Christmas,
and bless us your children, who long for your coming.**

PRAYERS OF PENITENCE

Our Lord Jesus Christ said:

The first commandment is this:

'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is the only Lord.
You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart,
with all your soul, with all your mind,
and with all your strength.'

The second is this: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.'

There is no other commandment greater than these.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

A// **Amen. Lord, have mercy.**

INVITATION TO CONFESSION

Human sin disfigures the whole creation,
which groans with eager longing for God's redemption.
We confess our sin in penitence and faith.

KYRIE CONFESSION

God, through Jesus Christ,
will judge the secret thoughts of all:

Lord, have mercy.

A// **Lord, have mercy.**

Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,'
will enter the kingdom of heaven:

Christ, have mercy.

A// **Christ, have mercy.**

Let anyone who has an ear
listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches:
Lord, have mercy.

All **Lord, have mercy.**

The Lord enrich *you* with his grace,
and nourish *you* with his blessing;
the Lord defend *you* in trouble and keep *you* from all evil;
the Lord accept *your* prayers,
and absolve *you* from *your* offences,
for the sake of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

All **Amen.**

THE COLLECT

The Collect is said, and all respond:

All **Amen.**

The Liturgy of the Word

BIBLE READINGS

The readings appointed for the day are read. The readings may be followed by a time of silence. At the end the reader may say:

For the word of the Lord.

All **Thanks be to God.**

Stand **HYMN**

THE GOSPEL READING

Alleluia, alleluia.

Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,
and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.

All **Alleluia.**

Hear the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ according to *N.*

All **Glory to Christ our Saviour.**

The Gospel reading appointed for the day is read.

This is the Gospel of Christ

All **Praise to Christ our Lord.**

Sit **SERMON**

The sermon may be followed by a period of silent reflection.

AFFIRMATION OF FAITH

Stand Let us declare our faith in God.

All **I believe in God, the Father almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

**I believe in Jesus Christ, his only Son, our Lord,
who was conceived by the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried;
he descended to the dead.**

On the third day he rose again;
he ascended into heaven,
he is seated at the right hand of the Father,
and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit,
the holy catholic Church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and the life everlasting.
Amen.

Sit PRAYERS OF INTERCESSION

These responses may be used

All Lord, in your mercy *or* Lord, hear us.
hear our prayer. Lord, graciously hear us.

And at the end

All Merciful Father,
accept these prayers
for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.
Amen.

The Liturgy of the Sacrament

Stand THE PEACE

In the tender mercy of our God,
the dayspring from on high shall break upon us,
to give light to those who dwell
in darkness and in the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.

All The peace of the Lord be always with you
and also with you.

Let us offer one another a sign of peace.

All may exchange a sign of peace.

OFFERTORY HYMN

The gifts of the people are gathered and presented.

The free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
By his mercy we present our lives to God as a living sacrifice.

PREPARATION OF THE TABLE

Look upon us in mercy not in judgement;
draw us from hatred to love;
make the frailty of our praise
a dwelling place for your glory.

All **Amen.**

THE EUCHARISTIC PRAYER

The Lord be with you *or* The Lord is here.
All **and also with you.** **His Spirit is with us.**

Lift up your hearts.
All **We lift them to the Lord.**

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
All **It is right to give thanks and praise.**

You are worthy of our thanks and praise,
Lord God of truth,
for by the breath of your mouth
you have spoken your word,
and all things have come into being.
You fashioned us in your image
and placed us in the garden of your delight.
Though we chose the path of rebellion
you would not abandon your own.
Again and again you drew us into your covenant of grace.
You gave your people the law and taught us by your prophets
to look for your reign of justice, mercy and peace.
As we watch for the signs of your kingdom on earth,
we echo the song of the angels in heaven,
evermore praising you and saying:

All **Holy, holy, holy Lord,
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Lord God, you are the most holy one,
enthroned in splendour and light,
yet in the coming of your Son Jesus Christ
you reveal the power of your love
made perfect in our human weakness.

A// **Amen. Lord, we believe.**

Embracing our humanity,
Jesus showed us the way of salvation;
loving us to the end,
he gave himself to death for us;
dying for his own,
he set us free from the bonds of sin,
that we might rise and reign with him in glory.

A// **Amen. Lord, we believe.**

On the night he gave up himself for us all
he took bread and gave you thanks;
he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat; this is my body which is given for you;
do this in remembrance of me.

A// **Amen. Lord, we believe.**

In the same way, after supper
he took the cup and gave you thanks;
he gave it to them, saying:
Drink this, all of you; this is my blood of the new covenant
which is shed for you and for many for the forgiveness of sins.
Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.

A// **Amen. Lord, we believe.**

Therefore we proclaim the death that he suffered on the cross,
we celebrate his resurrection, his bursting from the tomb,
we rejoice that he reigns at your right hand on high
and we long for his coming in glory.

All **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

As we recall the one, perfect sacrifice of our redemption,
Father, by your Holy Spirit let these gifts of your creation
be to us the body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ;
form us into the likeness of Christ
and make us a perfect offering in your sight.

All **Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

Look with favour on your people
and in your mercy hear the cry of our hearts.
Bless the earth,
heal the sick,
let the oppressed go free
and fill your Church with power from on high.

All **Amen. Come, Holy Spirit.**

Gather your people from the ends of the earth
to feast with [Nand] all your saints
at the table in your kingdom,
where the new creation is brought to perfection
in Jesus Christ our Lord;
by whom, and with whom, and in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all honour and glory be yours, almighty Father,
for ever and ever.

All **Amen.**

THE LORD'S PRAYER

Sit Let us pray with confidence as our Saviour has taught us:

All Our Father, who art in heaven,
hallowed be thy name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our trespasses,
as we forgive those who trespass against us.
And lead us not into temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power and the glory,
for ever and ever.
Amen.

BREAKING OF THE BREAD

The president breaks the consecrated bread.

Every time we eat this bread
and drink this cup,
All we proclaim the Lord's death
until he comes.

The Agnus Dei may be used.

All Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
have mercy on us.

Lamb of God,
you take away the sin of the world,
grant us peace.

GIVING OF COMMUNION

Draw near with faith.
Receive the body of our Lord Jesus Christ
which he gave for you,
and his blood which he shed for you.
Eat and drink
in remembrance that he died for you,
and feed on him in your hearts
by faith with thanksgiving.

All We do not presume
to come to this your table, merciful Lord,
trusting in our own righteousness,
but in your manifold and great mercies.
We are not worthy
so much as to gather up the crumbs under your table.
But you are the same Lord
whose nature is always to have mercy.
Grant us therefore, gracious Lord,
so to eat the flesh of your dear Son Jesus Christ
and to drink his blood,
that our sinful bodies
may be made clean by his body
and our souls washed

through his most precious blood,
and that we may evermore dwell in him,
and he in us. Amen.

The president and people receive communion. All are welcome.

The body of Christ
keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

and

The blood of Christ
keep you in eternal life.
Amen.

PRAYER AFTER COMMUNION

Silence is kept. The Post Communion or another suitable prayer is said.

All

We thank you, Lord,
that you have fed us in this sacrament,
united us with Christ,
and given us a foretaste of the heavenly banquet
prepared for all peoples.
Amen.

The Dismissal

Stand HYMN

ADVENT ACCLAMATION & BLESSING

Our Lord says, 'I am coming soon.'

All **Amen. Come, Lord Jesus.**

With love and compassion,

All **come, Lord Jesus.**

With judgement and mercy,

All **come, Lord Jesus.**

In power and glory,

All **come, Lord Jesus.**

In wisdom and truth,

All **come, Lord Jesus.**

May the Lord, when he comes,
find us watching and waiting;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among *you* and remain with *you* always.

All **Amen.**

As we await our coming Saviour,
go in the peace of Christ.

All **Thanks be to God.**