

Advent is the first season of the Church year, leading up to Christmas. The purple hangings represent a time of penitence. Churches are not decorated, nor weddings celebrated. Nevertheless it is a busy time in the church as we prepare for the Christmas services.

Dear Friends,

Today we begin the season of Advent and the new Church year. For many outside the Church, Advent marks a stressful time as we prepare for Christmas. Today's Gospel, however, urges us not to dash blindly towards Christmas Day. Jesus tells his disciples to stay awake! But what kind of wakefulness does Jesus ask of us? For many, adulthood is a time of sleeplessness. We are kept awake at night with worry and anxiety. But this restlessness impacts our ability to be awake to what really matters.

Advent is the time for us to awake up to the light of Christ coming into the world. Coming, firstly, in a lowly and hidden way, born as one of us, to heal and transform our humanity from within through the power of love. Coming, secondly, in the future to bring time to its fulfilment and an end to violence and suffering, judging each in the light of how they have loved. Coming, thirdly, into the intimacy of our hearts through the Holy Spirit, calling us, through the transformation of our desires, thoughts and actions, to attend to others and the world with love's fierce tenderness. This makes Advent a time to realign our priorities to what matters, both by letting what is in the depths of our hearts emerge, and allowing them to be transformed, not by our own efforts alone, but by Christ's presence. This takes a certain kind of disciplined patience that challenges us behold the deeper meaning of things. T. S. Eliot, drawing on Christian spiritual wisdom, evokes this in his poem, East Coker:

I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope / For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; wait without love, / For love would be love of the wrong thing; there is yet faith / But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting. / Wait without thought, for you are not ready for thought: / So the darkness shall be the light, and the stillness the dancing. / Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning. / The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry, / The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy / Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony / Of death and birth.

Just as the poem connects waiting with concrete encounters that take us out of ourselves, so we are helped to watch and wait by the familiar traditions of Advent. For we mark the watch with advent calendars, candles on the wreath, carols, prayer vigils, and study groups. We commit ourselves afresh to loving and serving others, to awaken to those in need. We re-encounter Christ in the intimacy and grandeur of the Mass where simple bread and wine offer his real presence. All this shimmers with the gentle light of Christ's first coming as God made flesh. We are not waiting for a God wholly unknown to us, but one whose greatness finds a home in human reality. We are not kept awake out of fear; rather our hearts are awake with a restlessness rooted in the love of God revealed in Christ. Stay awake! Advent calls us to a wakefulness that comes not from worry but a fearless wonder and joy at the scope of God's love in our lives that no darkness can diminish.

With my prayers and blessings,
Fr Angus

This Week's Dates

Monday 28th **November** -- St George's Tots in the Centre – 10:30am to 12:00pm

Tuesday 29th – WRAP Community Choir - 7.30pm to 9.00pm **(Concert on Tuesday 13th Dec)**

Wednesday 30th -Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 11.30am

Compline in the Lady Chapel 7.30pm

Thursday 1st **December** -- Said Mass in the Lady Chapel - 9.30am

Advent Reflection Course in the Rectory - 1.30pm – 3.00pm

Friday 2nd – Fed & Nourished [formerly known as The Pop-up Pantry] in the centre 10.00am

Sunday 4th - Advent 2 - Parish Mass 10.00 am

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Advent and Christmas Dates (in addition to regular Sunday services):

27 November – 6pm Advent Liturgy – We wait and watch for the coming of Christ with passages from scripture, hymns, and advent carols sung by the choir.

10th December – 11.00am to 2.00pm Christmas Fair in the Centenary Centre

18 December – 4pm Parish Carol Service – A service featuring well-known carols, beautiful choral music, and readings proclaiming the birth of Christ.

20 December – 7pm Carol Singing – All are welcome to come along and sing Christmas Carols at locations around the parish. Minced pies and hot beverages supplied.

24 December – 3pm Carols around the Crib (for families and young children) – Through song, story and actions, take part in the wonder and joy of the nativity.

24 December – 11pm Midnight Mass – The Light shines in the darkness; the Word becomes flesh. Experience the mystery of Christ's Incarnation with choral music and the blessing of the crib.

25 December – 10am Choral Mass – With great joy and thanksgiving, we celebrate the birth of Jesus at our main Sunday Parish Mass. All are welcome

Wednesday Compline/Night Prayer – There will be a contemplative service of night prayer every Wednesday during Advent 7:30pm in the Lady Chapel. The service will be contemplative, have a sung element and a period of silence.

Thursday afternoon Advent Reflection Group – commencing on December 1st - 1:30pm-3:00pm in the Rectory. "Lectio Divina during Advent – Prayer and reflection with Scripture, Art and Music." Course materials will be supplied and simple refreshments served. There is a sign-up sheet from Sunday to gauge interest and availability.

Carol singing in the parish, 7pm Tuesday 20 December – You are invited to join us in a small but enthusiastic group of singers, drawn from our choir and congregation, to go out into the cold dark of winter to spread warmth, light and tidings of great joy by singing carols in the local community. No previous experience required! The proposal is to begin at the Amphitheatre and then perambulate, singing on the way, to Royal Close, off York Road. The hope is that minced pies and hot drinks will be served along the route. Please speak to Sue Howell-Evans or Fr Angus if you are interested. A sign-up sheet is available at the back of church.

St George's Ramblers Our pre-Christmas ramble will take place on Saturday 3rd December, repeating our last year's seasonal walk around Vinnetrow Lakes, along to the Walnut Tree in Vinnetrow Road, Runcton. The Walnut Tree opens at 11am and I hope that this will provide an opportunity for others to join us there for coffee. We will gather in the car park at St George's at 9.30am for a 9.45am departure, walking along Whyke Road, crossing the A27 via the footbridge. Please let Jenny Harding know by the evening of 30 November whether you hope to join the walk. It would also be helpful to know of non-walkers who intend just to come to the Walnut Tree for coffee. This will enable her to check in advance that they can be accommodated. To contact Jenny - jennyfitchharding@gmail.com or 07786 071759.

Our Christmas Fair will be taking place on **Saturday 10th December** --11.00am to 2.00pm in the Centre, with many stalls and a visit from Father Christmas. We still need bottles for the tombola, books and items for the craft table, Sue Godfrey particularly asks for chocolate, Maltesers, mini marshmallows, toys, children's books and toys, and soft toys for the children's tombola. We also hope to have a stall selling unwanted gifts if enough are donated. There are boxes at the back of the Church for donations. Should you have an idea for running a stall please do have a word with Sue Bainbridge Tel. 784424

WRAP-CHAT – Next social event **Wednesday 7th Dec.** in The Centre @ 3pm. Musical entertainment by our own Sue Howell Evans, raffle and tea party. All are welcome. Donations for the raffle table would be appreciated, please have a word with Geraldine, Fr Bill or Fr Philip. Thank you.

Contact details:

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