

## **DECEMBER BLOG 2021**

As we begin the Liturgical Year may we ask the Holy Spirit to guide us in our preparation for the birth of Jesus.

Advent is a time of preparation for Christmas. Traditions at Advent include advent calendars or crowns counting down the days or weeks until Christmas Day. Advent ushers in a season of grace in preparation for the coming of Christ, His second coming and His coming in our lives, through grace and the sacraments. God is coming to us because He loves us. We are called to respond in love to God by letting go of all that is unworthy of his children. To be grace filled, one should be aware of how empty one is and how much of Jesus one needs.

### **November 28<sup>th</sup> First Sunday of Advent. A Reflection**

Jesus said to his disciples: “Be constantly on the watch! Stay awake!... You do not know when the Master of the house is coming.” Mark 13:33

Oh Jesus, your voice sounds through the house of my world. Be on your guard! Stay awake! Yet I hardly hear you. Busy with so much, I go about the things I do like a servant trapped in household routine, hardly giving a thought to what my life is about. My spirit within has grown tired and you, my God, seem far away. How can I hear your voice today?

Speak to my heart during this season of grace, as you spoke to your prophets and saints. Remind me again of the journey you call me to make and the work you would have me do. I am your servant, O Lord. Speak to me in this holy season and turn my eyes to watch for your coming.

O Emmanuel, Jesus Christ, desire of every nation, Saviour of all peoples, come and dwell among us.

### **December 5<sup>th</sup> Second Sunday of Advent**

When John the Baptist made his appearance as a preacher in the desert of Judea, this is what he said: “Reform your lives. The reign of God is at hand!” Mt 3:1

O Jesus, in an empty desert your prophet John proclaimed God is here, at your side. God has come to bring about a Kingdom where injustice and suffering will be no more, where tears will be wiped away, and for those who turn to God will feast at a banquet.

Turn now, your God is standing at your side. Reform your lives, God's Kingdom is at hand. In an empty desert, John said these things:

Give me faith like John's, O Lord, strong enough to believe even in a desert that you and your kingdom are no farther from me than my hand. Make my heart strong like his, not swayed by

trials or snared by false pleasures. Give me courage to be faithful until your promises are fulfilled.

O King of all nations, Jesus Christ,  
Only joy of every heart, come and save your people.

### **December 12<sup>th</sup> Third Sunday of Advent**

John's disciples said to Jesus "Are you He who is to come, or do we look for another?" In reply, Jesus said: "Tell John what you hear and see: the blind recover their sight, cripples walk, lepers are cured, and the poor have good news preached to them..." Lk 3:10

O Jesus, I rejoice at the signs that say you are near. Your power is everywhere if I could see it. Yet my eyes often see only darkness and what has yet to be done. I believe in you, yet when I look around evil seems so strong and goodness so weak. If you have come, why is there still so much suffering and why do the poor still despair? Where are your miracles today?

Your grace, oh Lord, is more fruitful in my world than I imagine. I know your power is everywhere around me if I could only see it. Show me today where the blind see and cripples walk. Make my vision sharper than it is.

### **December 19<sup>th</sup> Fourth Sunday of Advent**

The Angel Gabriel said to Mary, "Do not fear, Mary, you shall conceive and bear a son and give him the name Jesus. Great will be his dignity and he will be called Son of the Most High..." Lk 1

O Jesus, I believe you were born of Mary and are God's Son. Your mysterious coming is beyond understanding. Yet like your Holy Mother, Mary, I wish that you come to me, for you promised you will. Let me serve you in any way I can and know that you are with me day by day as my life goes by.

Like Mary, your mother, though I know you only by faith, may my whole being proclaim your greatness and my spirit rejoice in your favour to me.

Oh wisdom, Holy Word of God, Jesus Christ, holding all things in your strong yet tender hands come and show us the way to salvation.



## Feast Days in December

3 <sup>rd</sup> St Francis Xavier	<a href="https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-francis-xavier">https://www.franciscanmedia.org/saint-francis-xavier</a>
6 <sup>th</sup> St Nicholas of Myra	<a href="https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint">https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint</a> id=371
8 <sup>th</sup> Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception	<a href="https://www.org/mary">https://www.org/mary</a>
14 <sup>th</sup> St John of the Cross	<a href="https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint">https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint</a> id=65
25 <sup>th</sup> The Nativity of Jesus	
26 <sup>th</sup> St Stephen	<a href="https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint">https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint</a>
28 <sup>th</sup> The Holy Innocents	<a href="https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint">https://www.catholic.org/saints/saint.php?saint</a>

## December 8<sup>th</sup> SOLEMNITY OF THE IMMACULATE CONCEPTION



Pope Francis said of Mary, “Mary our Mother does not need a flood of words. She does not need us to tell her what is happening in our lives. All we need to do is whisper, time and time again: Hail Mary....”

The Catholic dogma of the Immaculate Conception holds that from the first instant of its creation the soul of the Virgin Mary was free from Original Sin. This doctrine is not to be confused with that of the Virgin Birth, which holds that Jesus was born of a virgin mother. In 1854, Pope Pius IX issued a solemn decree declaring the Immaculate Conception to be a dogma essential for belief.

<https://www.catholicculture.org/culture/liturgicalyear/calendar/day.cfm?date=2021-12-08>  
<https://www.catholicbishops.ie/adventcalendar/>

## December 10<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Day

Human Rights Day is celebrated every year since 1948 when the United Nations adopted the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Let us stand together for equality, justice and human dignity.

Perhaps this year you could stress the many volunteers at local, national or global level who daily stand with and for those in need. Your school or parish may be collecting food items to be distributed in your local area this Christmas or perhaps you could engage students in looking at how Christmas gifts can be purchased through Trocaire or one of the many charities helping people in the third world.

## **Other Dates / Information**

### **BE STILL - ADVENT DAILY REFLECTIONS**

The Office for Mission and Ministry are offering daily reflections for our Advent Journey. The theme is “Be Still”. The reflections will be posted each morning on the Facebook page of the office for Mission and Ministry.

<https://www.facebook.com/officeformissionandministry>

**CREDIBLE CATHOLIC is a FREE Religious Education Programme** for all schools with non – exam senior cycle groups from the Council for Catechetics of the Irish Episcopal Conference. Feedback so far from schools has been very positive.

<https://www.catholicschools.ie/crediblecatholic>

### **CHAPLAINS: MINISTERS OF HOPE**

This new publication edited by Alan Hilliard and with a foreword by Bishop Eamonn Walsh presented by Messenger Publications in conjunction with the Blackrock Clinic was launched by Mary Harney and you can hear her engaging, reflective, and thought-provoking address below.

<https://youtu.be/f3TQ7jaoTEc>

The Book is available in all good bookshops or on-line at [www.messenger.ie](http://www.messenger.ie)

**Freedom and Space in Catholic Education** is an excellent article by Hilda Campbell in the November issue of Intercom that could be used by Chaplains and Catechists to engage senior cycle students

**ARCHBISHOP FARRELL** celebrated Mass for the Opening of the School Year on November 10<sup>th</sup>. Due to the current restrictions on gatherings, it was not possible to issue an open invitation to all schools in the Diocese to attend. Please see the Homily delivered on the night by Archbishop Farrell.

<https://www.dublindiocese.ie>

### **The EMBER Programme**

Congratulations to the Ember Team at Holy Faith Secondary School, Glasnevin and their staff who led us in song at the Opening Year Mass in DCU in November. St Augustine is reputed to have said “To sing well is to pray twice”. The students are a credit to their community.

### **CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK 2022**

The theme this year is “Catholic Schools: Living Life to the Full”. All downloadable resources for celebrating Catholic Schools Week will be available in early January.

<https://catholicschools.ie>

## ADVENT RESOURCES

As we prepare for the celebration of Christ's Birth, we reflect on how we are living our lives today.



In the words of Pope Francis "Peacemakers truly make peace; they build peace and friendship in society. To those who sow peace Jesus makes this magnificent promise: They shall be called children of God"

**Are YOU a Peacemaker?**

### **One Solitary Life**

He was born in an obscure village,  
the child of a peasant woman.  
He worked in a Carpenter shop until  
he was 30, and then for three years  
he was an itinerant preacher.  
He never wrote a book.  
He never held an office.  
He never owned a home.  
He did none of those things we usually  
associate with greatness.  
He had no credentials but himself.

When he was still a young man,  
the tide of public opinion turned against him.  
His friends ran away.  
He was turned over to his enemies  
He went through the mockery of a trial.  
He was nailed to a cross between two thieves  
while he was dying, his executioners  
gambled for the only piece of property  
he had on earth, and that was his coat.  
When he was dead, he was laid  
in a borrowed tomb through the pity of a friend.

Twenty centuries have come and gone,  
 and today he is the central figure  
 of the human race.  
 all the armies that ever marched,  
 all the navies that ever sailed  
 all the parliament's that ever sat,  
 all the kings that ever reigned,  
 put together,  
 Have not affected the life of man upon this earth  
 as that one solitary life.

**WHY?**

The Jesse tree is a very ancient custom. It is the family tree of Jesus. Its name comes from Jesse, who was the father of King David. Jesse and King David were ancestors of Jesus. The Jesse tree shows us more of the important people in the Old Testament. We know that Jesus is the king that God promised to send. We use the Jesse tree to remind us of God's promise.



**MAKE A JESSE TREE**

Place a branch in a pot of dirt or gravel and cover bucket with Christmas paper. Just use a dead branch or draw and cut out a branch on cardboard. Attach a string or coloured ribbon to hang them from the branch.

**SYMBOLS**

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| 1. The 7 days of creation around the tree: | Sun, Moon, Stars, Animals, Fish, Birds, Earth |
| 2. Adam and Eve:                           | Serpent, Apple                                |
| 3. Noah:                                   | Ark, Pairs of Animals, Dove and Olive Branch  |
| 4. Abraham:                                | Torch , Sword, Pilgrim Staff                  |
| 5. Isaac:                                  | A stone altar, bundle of twigs                |
| 6. Jacob:                                  | Kettle, Ladder, Flower with 12 petals         |
| 7. Joseph:                                 | Bucket, Well, Multicoloured robe              |
| 8. Moses:                                  | Basket, Tablet of Law                         |
| 9. Jesse:                                  | Crimson robe, Shepherd's staff, rose.         |
| 10. David:                                 | Harp, Crown, Sceptre, Key, Six-pointed star.  |
| 11. Solomon:                               | Temple, Scales of Justice                     |
| 12. Mary:                                  | Lily, Stars around a crown, Pierced heart     |
| 13. Jesus:                                 | Manger, Cross, Crown, Trumpeter, Angel        |





Look out for information on your Parish website or Church noticeboard on how your school can become involved with the Synod

### Archdiocese of Dublin

See the Archdiocese of Dublin website for information on events, which take place throughout the diocese.

<https://www.dublindiocese.ie>



**MAY WE TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO WISH YOU AND YOUR FAMILIES  
A JOYFUL, SAFE AND RESTFUL CHRISTMAS AND A NEW YEAR FILLED  
WITH GOD'S ENLIVENING SPIRIT OF LOVE**