



COME, LORD JESUS!

Reflections for
the Season of
Advent

In His Own Words ...
POPE FRANCIS



What is communicated in the Church, what is handed down in her living Tradition, is the new light born of an encounter with the true God, a light which touches us at the core of our being and engages our minds, wills and emotions, opening us to relationships lived in communion.

— *Lumen Fidei*, 40

The Kingdom Is Near

Matthew 3:1-12



In this week's Gospel, we are introduced to Jesus' cousin, John the Baptist, who is preaching in the wilderness. John announces that the kingdom of heaven is near, calls his hearers to repentance, and points to Jesus as the mightier one. The "kingdom of God" refers to the fullness of God's power and presence that will be acknowledged by all creation. John prophesied that the nearness of God's kingdom requires appropriate action — to repent, to be converted, to have a change of heart. While not fully realized on earth, we pray that it may be so: "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

ADVENT PRAYER

The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light! (Isaiah 9:1)

God of salvation,
help us give voice to the voiceless
as we cry out in the
name of your son, Jesus.
Amen.



1 What do I need to let go of this Advent season?

2 What would it mean for my loved ones if I lived the season with a changed heart?

3 What is one way I can help build the kingdom of God on earth?

SYMBOLS OF THE SEASON

Advent is rich with sacred symbols. The Scriptures are filled with images of light and darkness, cacophony and silence, waiting and fulfillment. The season's color is deep purple, reflecting the penitential and reflective nature of the season. Both the circular shape and the evergreen of the Advent wreath suggest eternal and everlasting life. Watch for these symbols:



CANDLELIGHT
Christ is the Light of the World



WATER
We recall our baptism and are born anew in Jesus



ANGELS
Witnesses to the Good News



EVERGREEN
In Jesus, we are given the gift of eternal life



CHANT
We await the birth of the babe in the manger



STAR
The cosmic sign that the King of Kings has been born

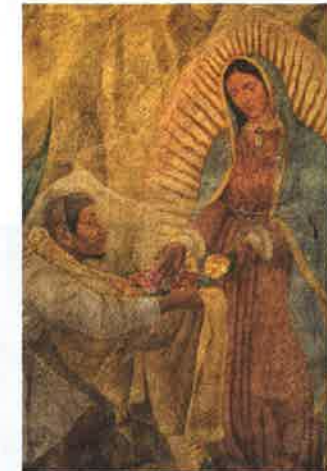


THE ANGEL TREE

Reach out to people in need this season, amid the clamor of commercialism. Many parishes, businesses, or Catholic Charities offices sponsor an Angel Tree. When you pick an angel from the tree, try to imagine what would light up that person's eyes as he or she opens the gift you prepare to give. Remember that all of us are exposed to the same marketing noise, regardless of our socioeconomic standing.

SAINTS of the SEASON

Juan Diego and Our Lady of Guadalupe
Patroness of Mexico and the Continental Americas



On Saturday morning, December 9, 1531, a poor Indian boy named Juan Diego was on his way to attend Mass in honor of Our Lady when a young maiden dressed like an Aztec princess appeared to him.

The lady spoke to him in his own language and sent him to the bishop of Mexico. The bishop was to build a chapel in the place where the lady appeared — near a hill called Tepeyac. The bishop asked for a sign, so the lady provided roses for Juan to carry in his cape, or tilma. Three days later, when Juan Diego opened his tilma in the bishop's presence, the roses fell to the ground and the bishop sank to his knees. On Juan Diego's tilma appeared an image of Mary exactly as she had appeared at the hill of Tepeyac. Juan Diego was canonized a saint in 2002. His feast day is December 9. The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is December 12. The tilma is in exceptional condition and is displayed in the Basilica of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico.

The central focus of the season is the coming of the Lord. Advent comes from the Latin *adventus*, meaning "coming." The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* stresses this twofold meaning: "When the Church celebrates *the liturgy of Advent* each year, she makes present this ancient expectancy of the Messiah, for by sharing in the long preparation for the Savior's first coming, the faithful renew their ardent desire for his second coming" (524).