

Joy

THE COMING OF

Always Be Ready

Matthew 24:37-44

The focus of our Scripture readings for the first two weeks of Advent is not on the infant's coming in Bethlehem but on the resurrected Christ's final coming at the end of history. Jesus tells us in this passage from Matthew that no one knows the day or the time when the end will come.

Today's Gospel seems filled with judgment; yet, placed with the other two readings and the responsorial psalm it surprises us with an opportunity to be prepared. Even though we don't know how

or when the Son of Man will come, we're invited to live in joyful hope, to prepare, to be attentive, to always be ready, because our lives are lived generously, kindly, and peacefully.

The early Christians believed they were already living in the "end time," that any day the risen Jesus would return to establish his kingdom on earth. Thus they tried continually and constantly to live in joy and readiness, to be aware of and appreciate the present moment — for that is where God is now (and always will be).



"Joy is the true gift of Christmas, not the expensive presents that demand time and money. We can transmit this joy simply: with a smile, with a kind gesture, with some small help, with forgiveness. Let us give this joy and the joy given will be returned to us... Let us pray that this presence of God's liberating joy will shine out in our lives."

— Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI,
Dec. 18, 2005

POINTS TO PONDER

How might my other preparations for Christmas day add to my heart's preparations during this Advent season?

Am I prepared for the ways God comes to me each day? Does joy or negativity reign in my heart and home?

How do I stay awake to God's coming and presence in the needs of the people around me?





ADVENT FEAST DAYS

St. Andrew (feast day November 30) was a fisherman. We know very little about Andrew from the Gospel accounts, but his feast day during this Advent season invites us to reflect on how quickly he answered Jesus' invitation to "Come after me" (see Matthew 4:19). With his brother, Simon Peter, Andrew immediately left his fishing nets to follow Jesus. During this Advent are we waiting for just the right moment? If we're waiting for the perfect time, might we miss the down-to-earth ways God invites us to be generous followers of Christ in all the ordinary happenings of our days?



5 Ways

to Practice Advent Joy

Think of one thing you might do each day to prepare for the second coming of the Son of Man.

As this Advent begins, start or deepen a specific prayer ritual, an intentional time for prayer, during your day. This designated time with a particular prayer you enjoy can set the atmosphere for your day: recognizing all the ways God is already — and always — with you.

God comes each day through the people in our lives. Show your joy and appreciation of others by placing welcome mats at the doors of your home.

Rather than participating in Cyber Monday, join the many who are part of Giving Tuesday, a global day dedicated to giving back. For more information, visit www.givingtuesday.org.

Decide on one thing to do each day to be more aware of the present moment.



Advent Prayer

Ever present God, open my heart to welcome you. Help me to always be prepared — prepared to see you all around me and prepared to live as Jesus taught us: with care, compassion, generosity, and peace.

FAMILYTIME



Connect the celebration of Thanksgiving with Advent. Each evening during Advent, talk about what each family member is thankful for. Write these on paper strips to make into links (perhaps red and green), slowly assembling a paper chain to place on your tree or around your Nativity at Christmas time.

Catechism CONNECTION

"The coming of God's Son to earth is an event of such immensity that God willed to prepare for it over centuries. He makes everything converge on Christ: all the rituals and sacrifices, figures and symbols of the 'First Covenant' (Heb 9:15). He announces him through the mouths of the prophets who succeeded one another in Israel. Moreover, he awakens in the hearts of the pagans a dim expectation of this coming."

— *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 522