

# LOOKING AT LIFE THROUGH THE LENS OF THE GOSPEL



[www.orlaghinthecity.ie](http://www.orlaghinthecity.ie)

**FIRST SUNDAY OF ADVENT**

**1st December 2024**

**Luke 21:25** Jesus said to his disciples: "There will be signs in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and on the earth distress among nations confused by the roaring of the sea and the waves. <sup>26</sup> People will faint from fear and foreboding of what is coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken. <sup>27</sup> Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in a cloud' with power and great glory. <sup>28</sup> Now when these things begin to take place, stand up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near."

**Luke 21:34** "Be on guard so that your hearts are not weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of this life, and that day catch you unexpectedly, <sup>35</sup> like a trap. For it will come upon all who live on the face of the whole earth. <sup>36</sup> Be alert at all times, praying that you may have the strength to escape all these things that will take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

During Advent, we are invited to a real encounter with Jesus. It is a time to wake up and rediscover our joy in life. It is time to practise the words of Mary, 'Let it be', and to be open to what adventures may come our way. We become more aware of God's presence in the hidden places of our world, in ourselves and in people around us. Can we be signposts lighting the path for others?

**TRÍONA DOHERTY and JANE MELLETT – The Deep End**

The grace of Advent is hope, the virtue by which we human beings can recognise and welcome God present in the world but not experienced with our senses. The corresponding stage in Jesus' life which we celebrate in this season is when he was in the womb of Mary. It was a time in the history of salvation when the Word was made flesh, but was not visible, his presence was real but an object of hope, like the tiny mustard seed which we trust will eventually become a great tree in whose branches the birds of the air will shelter.

The fruit of Advent then, is that we grow in the virtue of hope that God is present even when he is hidden. We are undaunted by evil, do not give up on our dreams, face with confidence the present historical moment (ours, that of our society and of the modern world), welcome the people he sends us, and help them get in touch with the best in themselves—where God is present.

## **Scripture Comment**

On the first Sunday, Jesus himself is the model as he taught his followers the spirituality of "waiting in joyful hope". The passage is clearly in two sections, verses 25 to 28, and verses 34 to 36.

You must interpret verses 25 to 28 in the light of your experience, times when your world or the world of your family or other community collapsed. Allow the dramatic language to express this experience, making sure that you recognise the double movement of collapse and rebirth.

**Michel de Verteuil – Celebrating Advent**

This passage is taken from a chapter dealing with both the medium and longterm future for believers in which Jesus recognises that though he has come to bring freedom and peace, that does not mean there will be an immediate end to violence and suffering. The language is that of apocalyptic which is a type of writing aimed at encouraging people to believe in God's ultimate victory, the triumph of good over evil. By the time that Luke's gospel was written, people were wondering when would Jesus return and how would they know. Here they are reminded that the key thing is not to be able to tell the future but to be faithful to the way of Jesus, especially a prayerful way of reflecting on the times we live in.

**SEAN GOAN – Let the Reader Understand, Year C**

## Reflection

You might be wondering how are these readings supposed to help us get ready for Christmas? Well, they do this by reminding us that Advent is a time of waiting - a getting ready for the return of Jesus - not just a recalling of the first Christmas, but a preparation for the fact that he will come again. So the focus for us at the start of each Advent is the invitation to prayerful taking stock of how ready we are, as individuals and as a church, to receive him, however, wherever, and whenever he comes.

## SEAN GOAN

### POINTERS FOR PRAYER

1. We live in a time when we are told that disaster lies ahead for us and for our planet if we do not change our ways. But perhaps this new awareness can be a prelude to us changing our ways? The gospel was written to give hope to Christians in danger. What gives you hope amid the dangers facing our world today?
2. Our church community is also in crisis. The numbers of people attending church services have dropped. We have fewer clergy and religious. Scandals have rocked the church community. What helps you to keep faith in such circumstances?
3. Jesus himself is the model in this gospel story as he taught his disciples the spirituality of 'waiting in joyful hope'. What difference has watchfulness (in the sense of being watchful in prayer) and hope made to you in facing difficult situations?
4. Advent is a time that calls us to be alert to the signs of the hidden presence of God in our world. What reminds you of this presence of God? Have there been occasions when something woke you up in an unexpected way to the presence of God in the world, e.g. through love, beauty, nature, etc.?

## JOHN BYRNE OSA—Intercom

The words addressed to those who listened to Jesus are also addressed to us. These are appeals that we who belong to the church of Jesus must heed in the midst of the difficulties and uncertainties of these times.

*"Wake up"*, encourage one another. *"Lift up your heads"* with confidence. Do not look at the future, stuck in your calculations and forewarnings. Your liberation is at hand. One day you will no longer be crushed, oppressed, or tempted to discouragement. Jesus Christ is your liberator.

But there are ways of living life that prevents many from walking with their heads held up, trusting in the final liberation. Hence, Jesus is saying "be careful, so that your mind is not fogged up." Do not become used to living with a heart grown hard and callous, looking to fill your life with comfort and pleasure, indifferent to the heavenly Father and his children who suffer on earth. That kind of life will make you increasingly less humane.

"Stay awake always". Awaken the faith of your communities and take care to listen to my gospel. Be more diligent about practising my presence among yourselves. Don't let your communities remain fast asleep. Keep asking for strength. How can we "keep standing before the Son of Man"? How will we follow in the footsteps of Jesus unless the Father sustains us?

## JOSÉ PAGOLA—Following in the Footsteps of Jesus, Year C

Advent is a clarion call to renew once more, in a conscious and personal fashion, our engagement with the Good News. Behind the dramatic language of this passage lies a foundational faith conviction: there is a pattern and a purpose to life. The imposing immediacy of the times, with the impression of that being all there is, is challenged by Christian faith and hope. The second paragraph asks how we should act in the present. The answer is twofold: watchfulness and prayer.

Broadly speaking, Luke portrays Jesus as a prophet, part of whose prophecy has already come to pass and part of which remains to be fulfilled. The last verse is very good news: the arrival of the Son of Man contains no fears for those faithful to prayer, in faith and in hope.

### Commentary

When reading this material there are four levels to be distinguished

what really happened;

how was this interpreted in earliest Christianity

the continuing interpretation in Mark and QSayings Source

Luke's own reception suggests the following parameters for reading:

- a) History has an end and a purpose.
- b) The first generations of Christians read the terrible events of their day (the destruction of Jerusalem) as signs of the end; however *this was not the case*, as it turned out
- c) The consequent delay and reinterpretation are no excuse for complacency; courageous witness during the time of mission is still the call of all believers.

## KIERAN O'MAHONY OSA—[www.tarsus.ie](http://www.tarsus.ie)