

Wreaths: Advent devotions including the Advent wreath, remind us of the meaning of the season. Traditionally, Advent wreaths are constructed of a circle of evergreen branches into which four candles are inserted, representing the four weeks of Advent. Ideally, three candles are purple, and one is rose, but white candles can also be used. The purple candles symbolize the prayer, penance, and preparatory sacrifices and good works undertaken at this time. The rose candle is lit on the third Sunday, Gaudete Sunday. Gaudete Sunday is the Sunday of rejoicing, because the faithful have arrived at the midpoint of Advent, when their preparation is now half over, and they are close to Christmas. The progressive lighting of the candles symbolizes the expectation and hope surrounding our Lord's first coming into the world and the anticipation of his second coming to judge the living and the dead.

O Antiphons: The Roman Church has been singing the "O Antiphons" since at least the eighth century. They are the antiphons that accompany the *Magnificat* canticle of Evening Prayer from December 17-23. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but present ones as well. Their repeated use of the imperative "Come!" embodies the longing of all for the Divine Messiah.

-Bernard Kellett

Entrance antiphon: To you, I lift up my soul, O my God. In you, I have trusted; let me not be put to shame. Nor let my enemies exult over me; and let none who hope in you be put to shame.

First Reading: Isaiah 63:16-17, 64:1, 3-8

Responsorial Psalm: 79 **Response:** God of hosts, bring us back; let your face shine on us and we shall be saved.

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1: 3-9

Gospel Acclamation: Alleluia, alleluia! Let us see, O Lord, your mercy and give us your saving help! Alleluia!

Gospel: Mark 13: 33-37

Memorial Acclamation: When we eat this Bread and drink this Cup, we proclaim your Death, O Lord, until you come again.

Communion Antiphon: The Lord will bestow his bounty, and our earth shall yield its increase.



The First Sunday of Advent, Cycle B, 2023 Weekly Reflection: Advent:

"Advent invites us to a commitment to vigilance, looking beyond ourselves, expanding our mind and heart in order to open ourselves up to the needs of people, of brothers and sisters, and to the desire for a new world."- *Pope Francis, Angelus, 2018.*

Beginning the Church's liturgical year, Advent (from, "ad-venire" in Latin or "to come to") is the season encompassing the four Sundays (and weekdays) leading up to the celebration of Christmas. The Advent season is a time of **preparation** that directs our hearts and minds to Christ's second coming at the end of time and to the anniversary of Our Lord's birth at Christmas. From the earliest days of the Church, people have been fascinated by Jesus' promise to come back. But the scripture readings during Advent tell us not to waste our time with predictions. Advent is not about speculation. Our Advent readings call us to be alert and ready, not weighted down and distracted by the cares of this world (**Luke 21:34-36**). Like Lent, the liturgical colour for Advent is purple since both are seasons that prepare us for great feast days. Advent also includes an element of penance in the sense of preparing, quieting, and disciplining our hearts for the full joy of Christmas.

As we prepare for Christmas, the *General Instruction of the Roman Missal* notes some differences to the Mass that should be observed during the season. For instance, the priest wears violet or purple during Advent, except for the Third Sunday of Advent (Gaudete Sunday) when rose may be worn (GIRM, no. 346). Aside from what the priest wears, other aesthetic changes in the Church can include a more modestly decorated altar. The final days of Advent, from December 17 to December 24, we focus on our preparation for the celebrations of the Nativity of our Lord at Christmas. In particular, the "O" Antiphons are sung during this period. They are a magnificent theology that uses ancient biblical imagery drawn from the messianic hopes of the Old Testament to proclaim the coming of Christ as the fulfillment not only of Old Testament hopes, but of present ones as well.