

Week 1: Hope



Opening prayer

As we light the first candle on our Advent wreath, may we be awake to the signs of God's coming reign all around us. Lord, fill us with faith and courage, so we may proclaim that your hope is at hand. Amen.

(Light the first candle in your Advent wreath.)

Scripture

And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near. (Luke 21:25-28)

Reflection

As the calendar year draws towards its close and the days grow darker and shorter, a new Church year begins, and we enter the Advent season looking ahead for the coming of the light.

As always, we begin our Christian year with waiting. We wait in anticipation for the celebration of Jesus' birth at Christmas and we wait in hope for the day when Jesus comes again.

Yet, this is not passive waiting, as this startling reading from Luke's Gospel makes clear. Amidst chaos and distress, as people faint in fear and with the very powers of heavens shaken, we are called to stand tall and lift up our heads. Rather than allowing fear and confusion to paralyse us as we see the many problems in our world, we look up. We eagerly await and work for the coming of God's reign in our midst.

Christ is here, calling us to "keep awake", and trust that his light within us is stronger than the darkness. On this first Sunday of Advent let's join Saint Paul's prayer, asking

God to increase our love for all people, so that we can bring hope and healing to all creation.

For discussion

- On difficult days, what gives you hope? What signs of hope, near or far, have lately come to your attention?
- In *Fratelli Tutti*, Pope Francis writes: “Hope is bold; it can look beyond personal convenience, the petty securities and compensations which limit our horizon, and it can open us up to grand ideals that make life more beautiful and worthwhile” (#55). When have you witnessed ‘bold’ hope?
- How might your hope for the future help you to work for justice now?

Closing prayer

We stay awake, watch and wait,
for we do not know the hour
or the day of your arrival.

Come, Lord, bringer of hope.

Create in us a desire
for a world transformed
to reflect your glory.

Come, Lord, bringer of hope.

Lead us in your ways,
as together we make a change,
to dispel the darkness of poverty.

Come, Lord, bringer of hope.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT: Scripture texts taken from ESV Catholic Edition © 2001 by Crossway.