

# 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

Jesus said to his disciples: "Be on your guard, stay awake, because you never know when the time will come. It is like a man traveling abroad; he has gone from home and left his servants in charge, each with his own task; and he has told the gatekeeper to stay awake. So, stay awake, because you do not know when the master of the house is coming, evening, midnight, cockcrow, dawn; if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep. And what I say to you, I say to all: Stay awake" (Mark 13:33-37)

## Reflection

Mark writes his gospel for the early community of Christians in Rome at a time when Roman imperial forces have destroyed the Jewish temple and the followers of Jesus face violent persecution. It must have been hard to hold onto hope. Amid this suffering, Jesus assures them the "master of the house" will return. The Son of Man will come in power and glory to set all wrongs right.

Meanwhile, his message to them – and to us – is to not to be found complacent and sleeping but rather to "stay awake."

The people of Afghanistan have endured years of conflict, political turmoil and poverty. Their situation has been made worse by the Taliban takeover, especially for women and girls. Now two thirds of the population require essential humanitarian assistance including 15.3 million children.

Yet, people still hold on to hope. A CAFOD partner who works with women and girls in Afghanistan, says:

"It has been a difficult and painful year for us all as Afghans. But it has not stopped us from surviving every day and fighting for the spark of light in the darkest days."

As we enter this season of Advent, may we also “keep awake,” not losing hope in the face of the challenges the world faces, but ready to act together. Treasuring each other and our common home, may we stand ready at the door for the hour of our Master’s return.

## 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 The Jerusalem Bible © 1966 by Darton Longman & Todd Ltd and Doubleday and Company Ltd.