

Theme of the Week - Hope

On Sunday we marked the start of Advent, the preparation of the coming of Jesus at Christmas. And in the gospel on Sunday, Jesus starts by speaking about the strange signs in the sky for when the Son of Man comes again. This gospel will sound familiar because only two weeks ago, we hear the same passage but from the Gospel of Mark. We can't really be sure what Jesus meant when saying this but what we do know is Jesus will come again and we know this because God loves us dearly. The message from two weeks ago was: **to live in anticipation of the end of our own life or times and to always make sure we do so with God firmly in our hearts.** And just as we spend a lot of time getting ready for Christmas, so too must we spend time getting ready for the time when Jesus comes again. Advent is a special time the church sets aside for us to prepare. The Advent wreath that you will see is a good way of seeing the weeks passing - a circle of evergreen branches, with three purple and one pink candle. One candle is lit in each week of Advent (each candle represents a different theme: **Hope, Peace, Joy and Love**) with the pink candle lit on the third Sunday. We know that Jesus came to share love, forgiveness and peace with the world. If we share these gifts of his love each day by small acts of kindness, then we will be ready to enjoy the celebrations of Christmas and for when he comes again.

In the gospel, Jesus speaks of the end of time in metaphorical language. He is reminding his listeners that our own lives and our own time on earth will not last forever. Jesus' words are not there to make us fearful despite the fact that his words describe some devastation. His message is positive, because all the readings from Sunday point to the reality of peace and fulfilment. The promises made to a needy people who long for peace, are ones filled with **hope**, and tell us more about the God who makes them than those to whom they are made: a loving and provident God who offers us unlimited chances.

Some of the signs of turmoil and suffering described in the Gospel of Luke are the same as the signs surrounding the death of Jesus: disturbances in the heavens, darkness and menace. These indicate the same type of distress that accompanies any major upheaval - times that shake us completely out of our complacency. We are invited to stand before the Son of Man to receive the blessings promised by God.

During this season of Advent, we are invited to take a watchful attitude in our lives, to keep our destination in mind, so that we don't become preoccupied solely with the things that distract us from what is really important. We need to spend time on the important things, prayer and the work that we are called to do, so that we can stand confidently before Him. What are the things in your life that might hinder you from standing confidently before Christ? The season of Advent it is also important to remember that we can bring **Hope** to others? Through our commitment to our Catholic Social Teaching Principle of the 'Preferential Option for the Poor' we ask all to continue to support our Christmas Hamper appeal. How can you be more **Faith-filled and hopeful** to others who are poor this Christmas so we can bring Christ into their lives?

Hope

Weekly Reflections
1st December 2024
1st Sunday of Advent



From the Gospel of Luke (21:25-28, 34-36)

Jesus said to his disciples: 'There will be signs in the sun and moon and stars; on earth nations in agony, bewildered by the clamour of the ocean and its waves; men dying of fear as they await what menaces the world, for the powers of heaven will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. When these things begin to take place, stand erect, hold your heads high, because your liberation is near at hand.

'Watch yourselves, or your hearts will be coarsened with debauchery and drunkenness and the cares of life, and that day will be sprung on you suddenly, like a trap. For it will come down on every living man on the face of the earth. Stay awake, praying at all times for the strength to survive all that is going to happen, and to stand with confidence before the Son of Man.'

Prayer for the Week

Loving God, help us through this season of Advent so we can gain a new sense of expectation, and have confidence for the future. Help us to catch sight of the wonder of Christ, and so may we be ready to greet him when he comes again.

Come to us now, we pray in His name

Amen

Day 1

How many candles do we light during the season of Advent?

What does each candle represent?

Why do we show these gifts to others during Advent?

Day 2

What is a metaphor?
Why do you think Jesus uses this language and asks his disciples and us to stay awake and prepare ourselves?

Day 3

How do you prepare yourself for the future? How are you preparing yourself for your future career for instance?

How then can you prepare for Jesus?

How can you be more Faith-filled and Hopeful this Advent?

Catholic Social Teaching - Option for the Poor

A preferential option for the poor means that we think first about the needs of those who are the most vulnerable. Jesus taught that when we feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, clothe the naked, look after the sick and visit those imprisoned, we are looking after Him. We work wherever the need is greatest. We refuse to accept the suffering of our brothers and sisters. No one should be beyond reach of the love and support they need "The measure of the greatness of a society is found in the way it treats those most in need, those who have nothing apart from their poverty!"

The [Option for the Poor] affects the life of each Christian as he or she seeks to imitate the life of Christ." St Pope John Paul II, Sollicitudo Rei Socialis, 42

How this half term can you promote the Common Good in all that you do in St Joseph's and society?

