

Beginning Advent

Listen to this quote from W Paul Young who said: “Don't forget that in the midst of all your pain and heartache, you are surrounded by beauty, the wonder of creation, art, music and culture, the sounds of laughter and love, of whispered hopes and celebrations, of new life and transformation, and of **reconciliation and forgiveness**. With this in mind we begin Advent by lighting a candle amidst all the darkness and troubles in our lives and in the world. So, let this candle symbolise our longings, our desires, and our hopes. **Three “advents”** or “comings” shape our desires. We want to be **renewed** in the sense that **Jesus came to save us** from our sin and from death. We want to **experience his coming to us now**, in our everyday lives - to help us live our lives with greater meaning and greater purpose. And, finally, we want to **prepare for his coming to meet us at the end of our lives** here on earth.

So, let us begin by focusing on our longings, our desires and our hopes.

On waking up, each day this week, why not decide to light that candle by taking a few moments to focus. Pause for a minute or so as you get up and light an *inner* candle – you know, the one you received in Baptism. Pausing for a moment will help change how the rest of the day will be lived and experienced. Then choose a short prayer, something like the following:

“Lord, the light I choose to let into my life today is based on my trust in you. It is a weak flame, but I deeply desire that it dispel some of the darkness that afflicts my day, so that I am better able to taste the longing I have for you as my day unfolds and especially in my dealings with difficult relationships. Let this candle remind me of the hope your coming holds for me.”

Each morning this week that momentary prayer could become more specific - as a preparation for the day ahead. And wherever we go and whatever we do, in our travels and our encounters, during our meals, in our words, during a phone call, answering e-mails, and in our conversations, take a moment to relate them in some way to the desire for the three comings of the Lord:

- to be **renewed**
- to **experience Jesus' coming to us now**
- to **prepare for his coming to meet us at the end of our lives.**

And, every night this week, pause briefly before retiring. Take time to reflect on how your small candle's worth of desire brought light into your day. And give thanks. Retiring each night having expressed some gratitude is part of the preparation for growing our anticipation and desire for the renewal that Christ's birth offers us.

*Come, Lord Jesus! Come and visit your people.
We await your coming. Come, O Lord.*

Let us end with an Advent Prayer by Henri J.M. Nouwen

Lord Jesus,

Master of both the light and the darkness, send your Holy Spirit upon our Advent preparations for Christmas.

We, who have so much to do, seek quiet spaces to hear your voice each day.

We, who are anxious over many things, look forward to your coming among us.

We, who are blessed in so many ways, long for the complete joy of your kingdom.

We, whose hearts are heavy, seek the joy of your presence.

We are your people, walking in darkness, yet seeking the light.

To you we say, "Come Lord Jesus!" Amen.