

Advent 2020

A Camino through Advent



An excellent accompaniment to this virtual Camino is 'AN ADVENT JOURNEY' by Michael T Winstanley SDB—available from Don Bosco Publications, Bolton BL1 6PQ

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Most of us are well acquainted with the concept of a 'pilgrimage'; many of us will have been to Rome, Lourdes or the Holy Land on pilgrimage. We go for more than just a holiday; we journey with others to a Holy Place. In the Middle Ages, the tomb of St James in the Spanish town of Compostela was a popular pilgrimage centre. With no modern transport links, the pilgrims would have to reach their destination on foot, often taking weeks to get there.

However, it is in the journeying that the real spirit of pilgrimage is found; pilgrims would take off from various locations across Europe and follow the ancient way or CAMINO. As we journey to what will certainly be a very different Christmas 2020, we invite you to join us on the Advent Camino: each day we will offer a short reflection and prayer.

We have learnt a lot about our families, friends and ourselves over these past few months of lockdown and challenge. We have had to re-imagine what it is to be Church and community and, while it has not always been easy, we can continue to make a difference in the lives of others.

As we make this Advent Camino together, let us continue to pray for each other, and please contact us if you want special intentions mentioned. In this Camino, more than ever before in modern times, we are walking towards the loving embrace of God, the true light who comes to us at Christmas in the form of a child with trust and wonder.

Share that trust, share that wonder as we share this Advent Way together.



November 29, 2020—First Sunday of Advent

As we begin our Advent journey and light this first candle, we are presented with the vision of hope this Sunday, so needed in the light of all we have been through. In the first reading today, Isaiah writes to encourage a people enslaved and not seeing much place for hope in their lives for they are worn down. The events of these past few months have hurt us and worn us down, some more than others. Like the Hebrew people enslaved in Babylon, today more than ever we need to feel the loving presence of a God who cares and has not abandoned us because, like them:

We are the work of your hands (Isa 63:8).

The news of these last few months have filled us with dread and even fear, and it seems like not only the world is full of trepidation because of the onset of perhaps a more bleak future and a difficult future, a future where there could be lots of pain—we wonder what will happen to us. Jesus offers a 'wake-up call' in the Gospel today:

Stay awake for you do not know when the master of the house is coming...if he comes unexpectedly, he must not find you asleep (Mk 13:35).

The danger is that we can walk this Advent way and it makes no difference at all; we can be so caught up in our own worries and fears that our goal is fixed only on December 25, 2020 and the respite it might offer us. Jesus is offering us a real challenge today: to find hope in TODAY!

What brings you hope this First Sunday of Advent?

Watch and reflect: Secret Garden 'A Hymn to Hope'

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ISSWcxjS0_0

Prayer (as you light the first candle):

**Let nothing disturb you,
nothing frightens you,
all things are passing,
God is unchanging.**

**Patience gains all;
nothing is lacking to those who have God:
God alone is sufficient.**
(St Teresa of Ávila)

Monday November 30, 2020—Feast of St Andrew

It is wonderful to begin this Camino with a feast day; please celebrate feasts: get an ice cream or glass of something that cheers you. Feast days can distract us from the mundane or that which drags us down. As we reflect on the fisherman Andrew, we remember his hard work and his dedication to Jesus. He is the first disciple mentioned by John in his Gospel and he was the one to introduce his brother, Simon to Jesus—a chance meeting that was to change the history of humanity.

He saw two brothers, Simon and Peter...follow me (Matt 4:18–19).

We remember that, just like the others, he was asleep when Jesus needed him and that he ran and hid when Jesus suffered death and pain. Filled with hope in the Resurrection and strengthened by the gift of the Holy Spirit, it seems he went on to a preaching ministry, probably in modern Syria. Tradition has it that Scottish pilgrims brought bones of Andrew back with them and buried them in the place where the town of St Andrews now stands.

TODAY: Can you be that person to introduce another to Jesus by what you do or say?

We pray for the people of Scotland on this their national feast day:



TODAY: Make a virtual pilgrimage to the beautiful Scottish island of Iona:

<https://youtu.be/9gQoOYBRNj8>

December 1, 2020—Tuesday of the first week

Today we are presented with a heartfelt prayer of Jesus:

I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth, for hiding these things from the learned and the clever and revealing them to mere children (Lk 10:21).

Jesus is not anti-education or showing a reverse type of snobbery, he is revealing that the Gospel message is an inclusive message. One does not need a PhD in sacred scripture to follow the Lord, it is enough that we follow. We will make mistakes; we will get things wrong and we will probably hurt others along the way. As we journey this common Camino together, I pray that we learn from the problems that life throws at us and that we learn a simplicity of approach. If you are a parent or work with children, watch them today, be appreciative of their lives in your lives; as you educate them, be open to what you can learn from them.



TODAY: Preach the Gospel to all you meet today—only use words where necessary.

(Attributed to St Francis of Assisi)

We can pray:

***We pray for children, who sneak an ice lolly before tea,
Who can never do their spellings homework right,
Who put shoes on the wrong feet.
We pray for children born in places we would not be seen dead in,
Whose home is a detention centre on the border,
Who never seem to listen to a word I say.
We pray for children who hug us and for those who reject our care.
Who do not have enough food today,
Who cannot sit still.
We pray for children who inspire us,
Who are rainbows in an otherwise dark and cold world.
Who follow Jesus in all they do and say.
Today, Lord we pray and thank God for children.***

(Inspired by 'A Prayer for Children' by Ina Hughes)

December 2, 2020—Wednesday of the first week

In the Gospel of Matthew today, we are given a masterclass in how Jesus cares for those on the margins: he goes up into the hills and the crowds bring their **“lame, the crippled, the blind, the dumb and many others”** (Matt 15:30). Jesus makes them whole again: he offers hope and healing because he has compassion and **“feels sorry for them”** (Matt 15:32). However, in the Second Miracle of the Loaves, we see the wonderful and deep concern that he has for them all: they need to eat. Just as in the Feeding of the Five Thousand, Jesus takes the small offering from the disciples and transforms the gifts so that all are fed—they had as much as they wanted, and seven baskets of scraps are taken up. The evangelist tells us that four thousand men were fed **“to say nothing of the women and children”** (Matt 15:38). In your dealings with people today on our shared Camino, make sure you do INCLUDE everyone; Jesus gives us this example of Gospel inclusion for us to follow

TODAY: Donate something to your local foodbank.

We can pray:

Loving God, you reach all in our community; in your tender love, reach to those who are hungry this day. Those who are hungry because they have no food; those who are hungry of real care and attention. Help us to appreciate all those we meet today; help us, as we share our Advent Camino, to express our need for the support and love of others in our life.

AMEN

Reflect and pray: ‘You Needed Me – Annie Murray <https://youtu.be/-X79Jko9bBI>

December 3, 2020—Feast of St Francis Xavier

Francis was a friend of Ignatius of Loyola, as they studied together in Paris. Together they founded the great Jesuit order, and it is fitting today that we pray for the ministry of Jesuits throughout the world, not forgetting a special prayer for the first Jesuit Pope, Francis. After his ordination in 1537, Francis was sent to establish a mission in Goa—his missionary zeal took him to Japan and China, and he died on the island of Shangchuan. He was noted for his practical care of all and his stand for justice for native people, especially in the face of European domination. The Gospel today tells the parable of those wise people who build their homes on solid



foundations and not the sand—their home will stand during any storm. As we move forward to the light of Christmas, we need that faith of Francis Xavier: we need to base our lives firmly with Jesus.

TODAY: Pray for the Church in China.

We can pray:

O my Lord Jesus!

Teach me to be generous.

teach me to serve You as you deserve.

to give, and not to count the cost.

to fight and not to heed the wounds.

to toil and not to ask for rest.

to labour, seeking no reward,

save that of knowing that I do your will. AMEN.

December 4, 2020—Friday of the first week

The first week is nearly at an end; even in these difficult times, Christmas lights shine brightly on our high streets as we are invited in to spend what cash we might have. Christmas in a pandemic time is certainly going to be very different; we have to really open our eyes to see what is going on in our family, our parish, our town, our nation, our global community. In the Gospel today, Jesus heals two blind men who come clamouring to his door, "**Take pity on us, Son of David!**" (Matt 9:27). Jesus offers them both the gift of sight, on condition that they say nothing, but, true to human form, "**they talked about him all over the countryside**" (Matt 9:31). With a new vision, they are now disciples of the Word themselves; those that are healed can now begin an exciting path of following Jesus too.

TODAY: Try to look at your family in a new light and see something different in them.

Pause and reflect



We can pray:

Lord God help me to see properly and well today.

Help me to notice those little things in life that I might normally ignore.

Like the smile of a stranger that I pass on the road,

The warm and welcoming glow of the lights when I arrive home.

The attention that my family and friends need today.

Help me to use my heart to see what is invisible to the eye. AMEN

December 5, 2020—Saturday of the first week

I honestly think that one of the outstanding qualities needed in leadership today is empathy; we need to feel that we are understood and cared for. When we do not experience that care, understanding and compassion, our lives feel empty. During these last few months, we have come to rely on those family members or friends who have shown that compassion, and we have very quickly realised those who have not shown it.

Compassion is, I feel, a gift: just as we receive it from others, we are called to share it with others too. Our example comes from Jesus who sees the crowd mentioned in today's Gospel and he ***"felt sorry for them because they harassed and dejected, like sheep without a shepherd"*** (Matt 9:36).

Our Christian God understands where we are coming from because God has shared our lot. Our Christmas celebration shows empathy at its best. It is in this context of true compassion that Jesus chooses the twelve apostles, who are going to share his outreach and remind us that ***"the kingdom of heaven is close at hand"*** (Matt 10:7), and we will see this as they ***"cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers"*** (Matt 10:8).

True compassion is infectious, and we need it more than ever in these times-can you offer your compassion today?

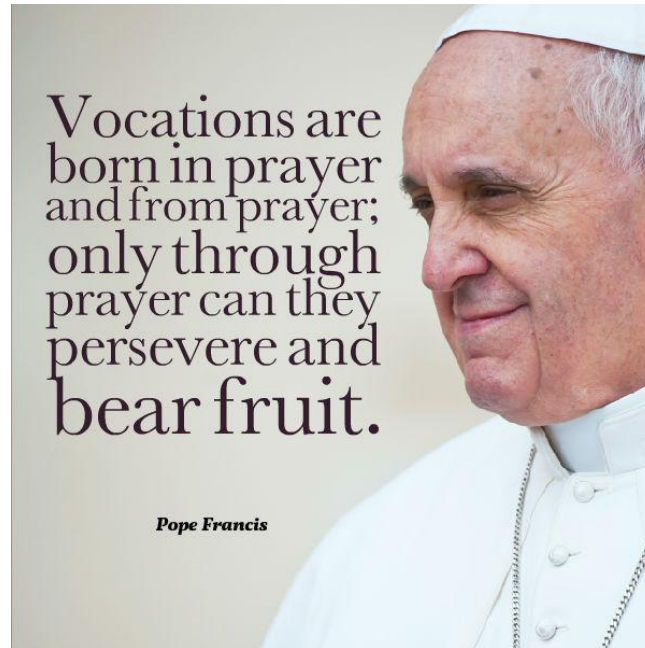
TODAY: As parents, grandparents, children, teachers, youth leaders, pastors, and friends can you do *one small act* that shows that you care for another?

Pause and reflect

Watch:

<https://youtu.be/jr8tffNHJno>

'I will always love you', no matter what!



We can pray:

Loving Father, you call us by name.

As we journey through life help us to be confident in our own unique identity and to find opportunities to develop our own gifts and passions.

We pray that the Holy Spirit will pour on us wisdom and guidance to help us realise and follow our dreams, discerning your plan for our lives.

Bless your Church by raising up dedicated and generous people from our families and friends who will serve as Priests, Deacons, Sisters and Brothers.

May we support one another in response to God's call.

We ask this through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN

For children (or anyone who likes colouring in!)



Mandy Grace '10

ministry-to-children.com

From Ministry to Children – free Advent colouring pages

<https://ministry-to-children.com/advent-coloring-book/>