

MONDAY
29 NOVEMBER
 Isaiah 2:1-5
 Psalm 122
 Matthew 8:5-11

TUESDAY
30 NOVEMBER
 Andrew
 the Apostle
 Isaiah 52:7-10
 Psalm 19:1-6
 Romans 10:12-18
 Matthew 4:18-22

WEDNESDAY
1 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 25:6-10a
 Psalm 23
 Matthew 15:29-37

THURSDAY
2 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 26:1-6
 Psalm 118:18-27a
 Matthew 7:21.
 24-27

FRIDAY
3 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 29:17-end
 Psalm 27:1-4.
 16-17
 Matthew 9:27-31

SATURDAY
4 DECEMBER
 Isaiah 30:19-21.
 23-26
 Psalm 146:4-9
 Matthew 9:35 –
 10:1. 6-8

REFLECTION

Advent is the season of dreams and nightmares. The coming of Christ is imminent. Will it bring life or death? Heaven or hell? This week Isaiah expresses some of humanity's most cherished dreams.

In Isaiah's dream world the descendant of King David rules on God's behalf over a world at peace. At its centre in a renewed Jerusalem God hosts a banquet to which all the world is invited. No one who comes will ever be afraid again, there will be free food for all, and no one will die. Those who were once powerless will be protected, and the sun will forever shine. The most anxious believer will be able to relax, as the voice in the ear whispers, "This is the way; walk in it." How we would like to live in that world now!

On Monday we read of its beginning, while in Tuesday's Gospel we hear how Andrew joins the movement that walks in the way of the Lord. Nothing will prove as straightforward as Isaiah or Andrew might wish, but it is part of the story that shows how our Advent longings will, in God's good time, be fulfilled.

PRAYER

Almighty God,
 as your kingdom dawns,
 turn us from the darkness of sin to the light of holiness,
 that we may be ready to meet you
 in our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.



St Andrew, Church of St Martin, St Valery sur Somme, France. jorisvo / Shutterstock.com

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ADVENT

PART I – THINGS YOU MAY OR MAY NOT KNOW ABOUT ADVENT

Caroline Hodgson looks at Advent and its associated traditions.

Most people will know that Advent is when Christians prepare to celebrate the birth of the infant Jesus. Many may also know that the first Sunday of Advent is the first day of the Western Church's liturgical calendar, and falls four Sundays before Christmas Day, while some may be aware that it is the Sunday nearest to St Andrew's Day, 30 November.

It may be less widely known that Advent is a season of penitence, when Christians anticipate the time when Jesus will come again as supreme judge – making it a time of moral and spiritual cleansing and preparation. This explains some of the traditions you may have wondered about, such as the colours used on the altar cloth and in the priest's vestments. Purple is the liturgical colour representing penitence, although sometimes a darker colour ("royal purple") is used, as opposed to the reddish ("Roman") purple of Lent. In some Anglican and Lutheran churches "Sarum blue" is used. This can be traced back to the medieval Sarum Rite (Sarum is the Latin name for Salisbury, where the custom originated). Also, if you look in the lectionary you'll see that Tuesday introduces a splash of red to the season, because that is the colour associated with martyrs, in this case St Andrew.

What nobody knows for sure is how long Advent has been observed in the Church. A canon of the first Council of Saragossa in AD 380, forbidding people to be absent from church from 17 December to Epiphany, is thought to be an early reference to Advent. By the fourth century it had become a forty-day fasting period, starting on St Martin's Day on 11 November, which was observed as strictly as Lent.

Of course no amount of knowledge can prepare us to meet our Lord, as a baby or at his second coming. But it can provide a focus for our prayer and preparation – to reflect, for example, on the sacrifice of St Andrew, or the spirit of penitence that is part of the season.

LIVE the WORD

SUSTAINING YOU THROUGH THE WEEK

Edited by
 Caroline Hodgson
 and
 Heather Smith



First week of Advent

Monday 29 November
 to Saturday 4 December
 2021

WEEK