

all of God's people. These words assure us that our sins have been forgiven; and that when our Lord comes, he will take us home with him. He will tend, gather, carry and lead us, just as a shepherd cares for his flock. As he does this, the glory of the Lord will be revealed to all of humankind.

The Advent season is a season during which God makes his glory known. Since the first coming of Jesus Christ, a new age has dawned; our Lord is both the 'glory for (his) people Israel' and the 'light for revelation to the Gentiles' (Luke 2. 32). As we await the return of Christ, we are to 'prepare the way of the Lord' so that he can reveal his glory.

Questions to ponder

1. This Advent, how might I personally prepare *myself* to meet the Lord afresh at Christmas ?
2. Are there any obstacles that are hindering me from experiencing new life in God?
3. What can I do to remove these obstacles?

A prayer

Lord, our Saving Light who came to set us free, shine upon us in your glory. May your light illumine our hearts and enable us to see how you really consider us and love us. Let the doubts hidden behind the question, 'Do you love me?' disappear as we advance through this Advent. Let openness to your love be the watchword of our hearts. Amen.

Suggested Advent actions

This week:

- I will make a conscious effort to experience the glory of God by receiving his forgiveness and his comfort.
- As often as is necessary, I will try to remember that I am God's beloved. I will deliberately banish the 'ifs' and the conditions that bar my confidence in God's love.

Fr. John Moore 2015



The Second Week of Advent

A devotional guide

Week 2: 6th - 12th December 2015

'...the word of God came to John son of Zechariah in the wilderness. He went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins...'

Luke 3. 2b-3a

During Advent, the Christian Church prepares to celebrate the historical coming of Christ to Bethlehem and anticipates his return. Indeed, when Christ comes again, it will be to judge the world and to establish a new kingdom, a new heaven and a new earth. It is for this reason that 'the four last things' - death, judgement, heaven and hell - have been traditional themes for Advent meditation.

Many of us will not like the word 'judgement'. We remember the many courtroom dramas we have seen on television, which depict cases of wrong having been done, the truth being exposed and punishment handed out. 'Judgement' may conjure up a vague idea that when it is our turn, someone will present God with a list of all the wrongs we have committed. The problem with this image is that it allows no place for the forgiveness of God. We also need to remember that judgement is not necessarily negative: it is not always a condemnation of what is bad, but can be a great affirmation of what is good.

So perhaps judgement can also be seen as an expression of God's love for those who have chosen to know him and to follow him. Our Lord, whose coming we await in Advent, will indeed come again as Judge; but this Judge is not a distant stranger. He is one who completely immersed himself in human life, suffered and died, demonstrating his love for each and every one of us.

Suggested Scripture readings

During the week, you may decide to set a bit of time each day and read short passages of Scripture that are given to prompt our reflection, response and prayer.

Monday	Luke 5. 17-26
Tuesday	Matthew 18. 12-14
Wednesday	Psalms 96. 1, 10-13
Thursday	Psalms 103. 8-13
Friday	Isaiah 35
Saturday	Isaiah 40. 1-11

We focus here on [Isaiah 40. 1-11](#):

¹ Comfort, O comfort my people,
says your God.

² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem,
and cry to her
that she has served her term,
that her penalty is paid,
that she has received from the Lord's hand
double for all her sins.

³ A voice cries out:

'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up,
and every mountain and hill be made low;
the uneven ground shall become level,
and the rough places a plain.

⁵ Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed,

and all people shall see it together,
for the mouth of the Lord has spoken.'

⁶ A voice says, 'Cry out!'

And I said, 'What shall I cry?'

All people are grass,

their constancy is like the flower of the field.

⁷ The grass withers, the flower fades,

when the breath of the Lord blows upon it;

surely the people are grass.

⁸ The grass withers, the flower fades;

but the word of our God will stand for ever.

⁹ Get you up to a high mountain,

O Zion, herald of good tidings;

lift up your voice with strength,

O Jerusalem, herald of good tidings,

lift it up, do not fear;

say to the cities of Judah,

'Here is your God!'

¹⁰ See, the Lord God comes with might,

and his arm rules for him;

his reward is with him,

and his recompense before him.

¹¹ He will feed his flock like a shepherd;

he will gather the lambs in his arms,

and carry them in his bosom,

and gently lead the mother sheep.

Commentary

When the prophet Isaiah wrote these words, he knew that his fellow Jews would soon be carried off to Babylon in captivity; and he believed that his task was to comfort them with words that could be cherished and preserved in the dark days ahead.

But these words (as is so often the case with prophetic texts) have another, greater purpose: to announce the coming of the Lord to