

ENGAGING

Advent

SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT



AWAKENING HOPE

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or those of us who grew up in the city or suburbs, the life of a farmer lies at an imaginative distance. As a child, we would occasionally visit the farms of my uncles and have tours of the barns.

Though the presence of the animals was unmistakable, the spaces themselves were fairly clean and tidy. The barn was an extension of the home, and my uncles took pride in the space. In Jesus' day, stables in remote villages were often caves, way stations for shepherds as they passed through. We don't know exactly what the Christmas stable was like, but it's possible the ceiling was low, the air musty, and the floor unclean. It's entirely likely that this stable was not prepared to receive the King of Kings. But Christ came anyway. He came into the space of over-use and neglect, and so he does with us.

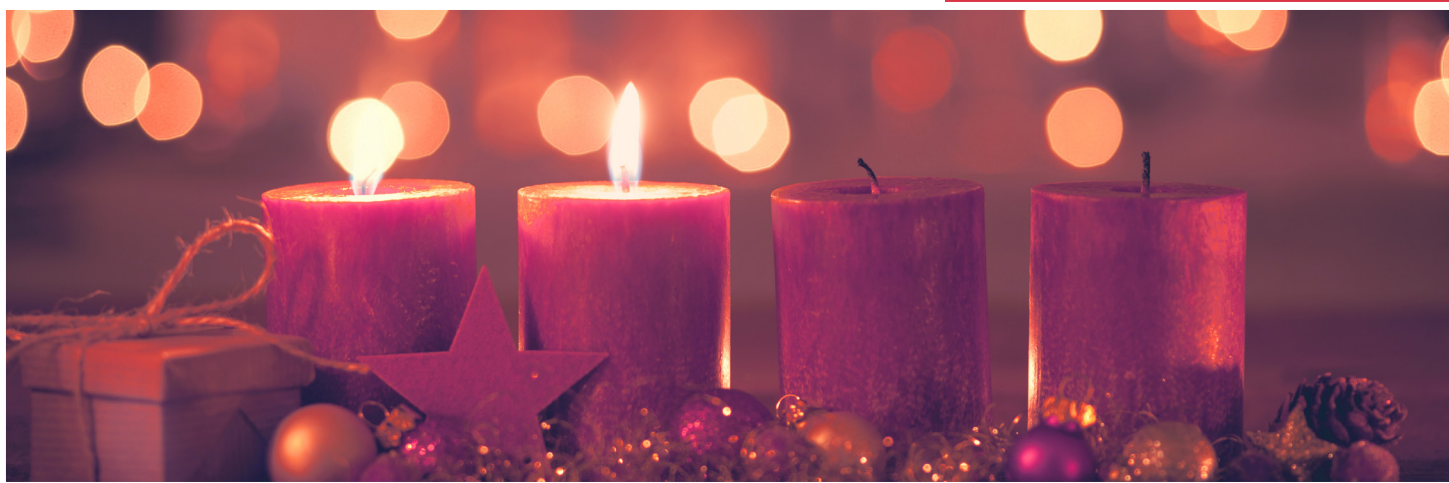
With all our talk of "preparing the way," it might be easy to become flustered with our spiritual readiness. We

might look at our life and think "my mind is too cluttered to pray" or "my schedule is too full to talk about Jesus with my children every single week." Maybe then we shrug and say "next year, when I have more time, then I'll better spiritually prepare."

Christ invites us to more! Whether you feel spiritually prepared or not, Christ comes anyway. St. Paul writes, "Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful" (Hebrews 10:23, CCC 1817). Like the stable two thousand years ago, Christ faithfully meets us in our imperfections, in our messy corners, in our areas of pain and neglect. Of course, taking specific time to prayerfully enter into the Advent Season is important. But there's no need to despair or become discouraged if we don't have it all together this week, next week, or by the time Christmas rolls around. He loves us enough to be born anew in our hearts anyway.

"Like the stable two thousand years ago, Christ faithfully meets us in our imperfections, in our messy corners, in our areas of pain and neglect."





CANDLESIDE CONVERSATION

As you light the second candle on the Advent wreath, invite your family to rediscover the hope of the season.

- What has been positive about Advent so far?
- Why is God becoming man in Jesus a source of hope to you?
- Do you know anyone who seems stuck in anxiety and discouragement? How might God be calling you to reach out to them?

// AT THE BEGINNING OF a new yearly cycle, the liturgy invites the Church to renew her proclamation to all the peoples and sums it up in two words ‘God comes.’ These words, so concise, contain an ever new evocative power...it is not used in the past tense – God has come, nor in the future – God will come, but in the present. At a closer look, this is a continuous present, an ever-continuous action: it happened, it is happening now, and it will happen again ... It rings out as a salutary appeal in the days, weeks, and months that repeat: Awaken! Remember that God comes! Not yesterday, not tomorrow, but today! Now! ...He is a Father who never stops thinking of us and, in the extreme respect of our freedom, desires to meet us and visit us; He wants to come, to dwell among us, to stay with us. **//**

—Pope Benedict XVI, homily on December 2nd, 2006

ADVENT Q & A

Q: On many Sundays, especially during Advent, we hear a reading from one of the prophets. What is significant about them for us?

A: Advent is a time of the church year when the prophetic word forms an important part of the liturgical season. Prophets do not predict the future—they are very much concerned about the present, calling Israel to follow once again the word of God. Advent prominently features the prophet Isaiah, particularly the later sections of his text known as the “Book of Consolation.” These chapters were written during the Babylonian exile, when Israel as a nation had been destroyed. The people of God were strangers in a strange land. At the time of Jesus’ birth, the Israelites were again under the control of a foreign power, the Romans. Many people were anticipating a Messiah who offered political salvation. Jesus is not that kind of savior! The prophets remind us of the different power of God’s redemption. Isaiah records words of hope, promise, and consolation that God will deliver His people. They called for a spiritual conversion, a turning of heart back to God, and a call to prepare His way.



KEEP WATCH IN WONDER

This week awaken hopeful anticipation in the coming of Jesus!

15 MINUTES:

Read the Nativity story from Luke chapter 2. Talk about what it means that God became man.

1 HOUR:

Collect twigs outside or purchase popsicle sticks from a local craft store. Make a manger and talk about the place where baby Jesus was born.

AN AFTERNOON:

Visit a local animal farm. Talk about what it was like for Jesus to be born in a stable.

AN *Advent Prayer*

Come, Lord Jesus, as we keep watch in wonder.

Come, Lord Jesus, as we prepare your way with hope.

Come, Lord Jesus, as we rejoice in your light.

Come, Lord Jesus, as you awaken our hearts to your life.

Amen.

