



DECEMBER
2020

Stella Maris

SUPPORTING SEAFARERS AND FISHERS AROUND THE WORLD

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Stella Maris is a Catholic charity supporting seafarers worldwide.

We provide practical and pastoral care to all seafarers, regardless of nationality, belief or race. Our port chaplains and volunteer ship visitors welcome seafarers, offer welfare services and advice, practical help, care and friendship.

Stella Maris is the largest ship visiting network in the world, working in 332 ports with 227 port chaplains around the world. We also run 53 seafarers' centres around the world.

We are only able to continue our work through the generous donations of our supporters and volunteers.



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Stella Maris
 provides seafarers
 with practical
 support, information
 and a listening ear

MILFORD HAVEN, WALES

Milford Haven in Welsh is known as Aberdaugleddau which means 'mouth of the two Rivers Claddau'. The town is situated on the northside of Milford Haven waterways, in Pembrokeshire County, South Wales which is considered to be one of the deepest natural harbours in the world.

It is also one of the longest terminals in North Western Europe. It has the capacity to handle or accommodate both the longest and widest vessels. Milford Haven as a town has been in existence for many centuries with its beautiful strategic waterways. The modern-day Milford Haven Port was however founded in 1793 by Sir William Hamilton empowered by the Act of Parliament he obtained in 1790. The initial intention of Sir Hamilton was to make Milford Haven a whaling centre. However; due to its strategic location, it became a dockyard for launching military operations in 1800. The first fishing trawler named Sybil docked in Milford Haven Port on the 27th September 1888. The Milford Haven Port became the hub of commercial fishing industry from 1900. By 1906, Milford Haven Port became the 6th largest fishing port in the United Kingdom which experienced its boom in 1921 handling hundreds of fishing trawlers. The fishing industry became the major source of revenue for the inhabitants. Its dockyard was equally used for building vessels between 1797 and 1814. No wonder William Shakespeare referred to Milford Haven as 'blessed Milford' in

Cymbeline Act 3 Scene 4. Admiral Nelson on his part described Haven Port as one of the finest harbours in the world, while the local inhabitants today call it 'the Little London'.

The decline in the fishing industry around 1950s, paved way for the new economic chapter in the history of Milford Haven Port. The diversification of the economy in the area of oil and Gas industry opened another door of prosperity. Major refineries were built beginning with Esso refinery in 1960, in the 1970s, Milford Haven Port became the second largest oil Port in Europe. Due to the decline in oil this has decreased but is still a significant part of operations in the vicinity of Milford Haven which handle about 25% of UK's energy/ Gas consumption.

The Stella Maris Chaplaincy is actively involved in providing essential services to the numerous seafarers visiting the port of Milford Haven and the Pembroke refinery. This includes providing transport services that enable the seafarers to have recreation time away from their vessels and to do their shopping from time to time. We also provide pastoral care and support which includes making the sacraments available and counselling for those who desire to have someone to listen to them on board or within the parish community. We provide the seafarers with religious items and publications to support them in their faith journey. Free sim cards are provided and

woolly hats distributed as well, donated by voluntary ladies in Milford Haven and beyond. Apart from this, our chaplaincy receives huge support from the ministry of Rev Paul Joseph and his parishioners every Christmas season for the past 6 years.

Our focus is on face to face meetings and ministry through regular ship visits. This remains one of the essential ways of providing the much-needed support for seafarers. It is well known that loneliness, isolation and work stress are some of the greatest challenges confronting seafarers today. Our visits pave way for some of them to have someone to listen to or talk with. It is a duty of care {Lk10:29-37}. By this, we become friends to strangers thus making their short visit relaxing, enjoyable and comforting {Matt 25:31-40; Jn 13:34-35}. I once drove two Asian seafarers to pray in my parish, and I asked if they would like to have a Mass celebrated for their intentions. It was at this point that one of them broke down in tears and told me that day was his son's birthday. The Mass became a comforting moment for him and he was so happy that he shared the joy with his family. Such little gesture leaves remarkable memory in the minds of seafarers. It also makes my ministry and service as a priest more fulfilling {Jn 13:14-17; Gal 5:14; Jn 15:12}.

With Covid-19 Pandemic, welfare packs are distributed to some vessels which include among others items needed to prevent the spread of the virus on board.



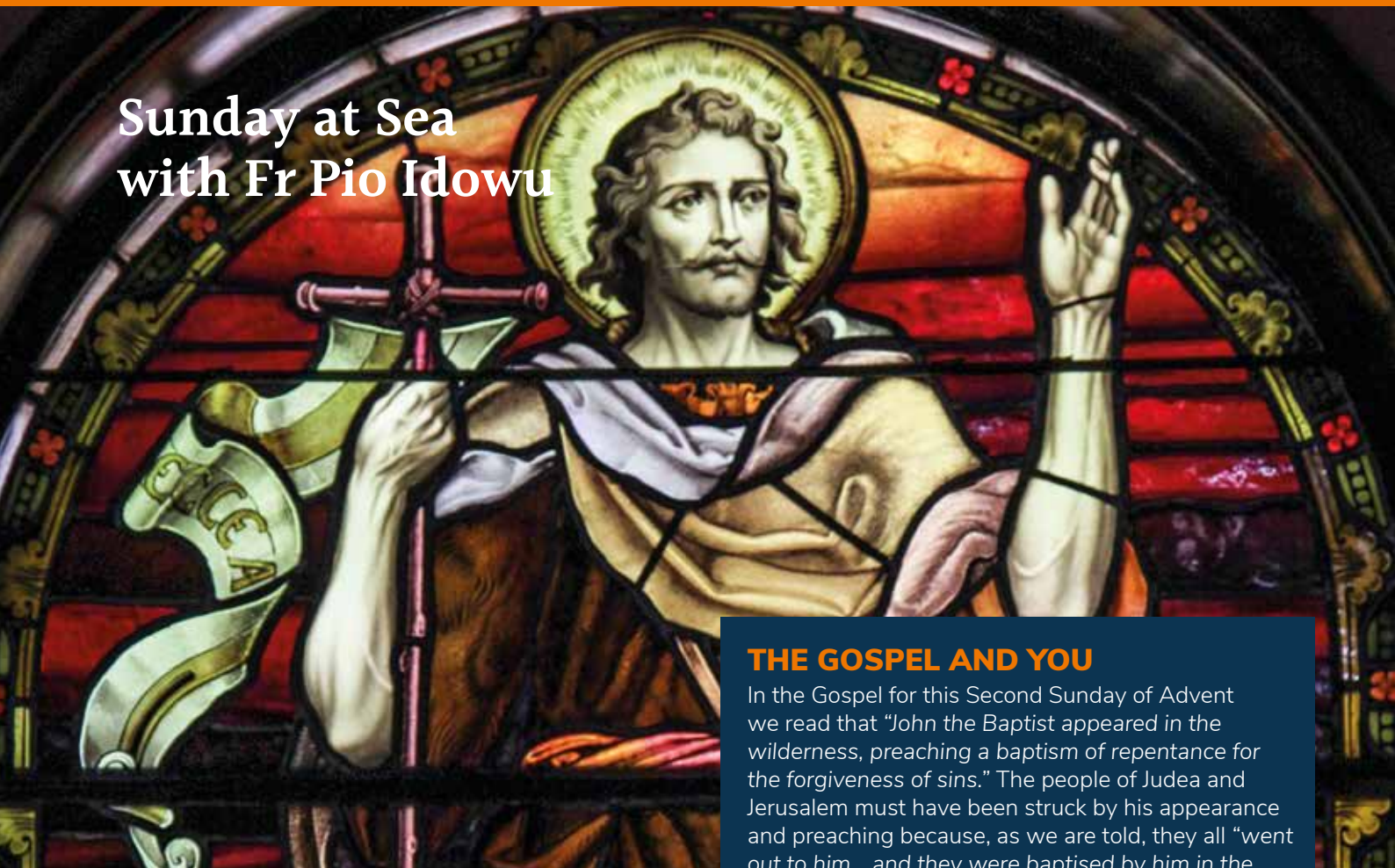
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Sunday at Sea with Fr Pio Idowu



SECOND SUNDAY OF ADVENT 6TH DECEMBER 2020

GOSPEL MARK 1:1-8

The beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

As it is written in Isaiah the prophet,
"Behold, I send my messenger before your face,
who shall prepare your way;
the voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the Lord,
make his paths straight—"

John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness,
preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness
of sins.

And there went out to him all the country of Judea,
and all the people of Jerusalem;
and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan,
confessing their sins.

Now John was clothed with camel's hair,
and had a leather belt around his waist,
and ate locusts and wild honey.

And he preached, saying,
"After me comes he who is mightier than I,
the thong of whose sandals
I am not worthy to stoop down and untie.
I have baptised you with water;
but he will baptise you with the Holy Spirit."

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

In the Gospel for this Second Sunday of Advent we read that "John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." The people of Judea and Jerusalem must have been struck by his appearance and preaching because, as we are told, they all "went out to him... and they were baptised by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins." John the Baptist is an example of the Christian disciple who is able, by word and example, to move hearts to repentance and conversion. And the baptism of repentance which John the Baptist performed was only a prefiguration of the Christian Baptism which would later be inaugurated by Christ and by which men would receive regeneration through the Holy Spirit.

Described as the one who was sent to "prepare the way of the Lord" and "make straight his paths", the person of John the Baptist has an especially important significance for us Christians during this period of Advent as we prepare for the Lord's Coming. His example of poverty and penance gave added weight to his preaching of repentance and conversion. Listening to his words and following his example, we Christians make a fruitful Advent preparation by turning away from vice and sin and opening our hearts to the gift of grace which Christ brings to us in His coming.

Sin hinders the work of grace in the soul. And when it is mortal, it separates us completely from the love of God. In this season of Advent, one way of preparing to celebrate the Lord's coming is by going to Confession. In Confession we acknowledge our sinfulness and beg the Lord's pardon, we manifest worthy signs of conversion and repentance and we open our hearts to receive the Lord who comes with His grace. And let us give thanks to God for the many priests who serve our ports and ships and make the Sacraments accessible to us.

THIRD SUNDAY OF ADVENT 13TH DECEMBER 2020

GOSPEL JOHN 1:6-8,19-28

There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. He came for testimony, to bear witness to the light, that all might believe through him. He was not the light, but came to bear witness to the light.

And this is the testimony of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, "Who are you?" He confessed, he did not deny, but confessed, "I am not the Christ."

And they asked him, "What then? Are you Elijah?" He said, "I am not."

"Are you the prophet?" And he answered, "No." They said to him then, "Who are you?"

Let us have an answer for those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?"

He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."

Now they had been sent from the Pharisees. They asked him, "Then why are you baptising, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" John answered them, "I baptise with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." This took place in Bethany beyond the Jordan, where John was baptising.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

The third Sunday in the season of Advent is called Gaudete Sunday. It is so called because 'Gaudete', which is the Latin word for 'Rejoice' is the first word in the entrance antiphon for today's liturgy: "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Indeed, the Lord is near." We rejoice because the Lord is near and brings with Him the peace of God which surpasses any peace the world can give.

The Lord is not only near to us, He is already with us. After confessing that he was not the Christ, John the Baptist was asked by the Pharisees: "Then why are you baptising, if you are neither the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the prophet?" And this was his reply: "I baptise with water; but among you stands one whom you do not know, even he who comes after me, the thong of whose sandal I am not worthy to untie." The Lord is in our midst but sadly, many fail to recognise Him.

But we who believe, we recognise Jesus and His presence within us brings us peace and consolation. Christ is present in the Christian soul in a twofold manner. He is present sacramentally at the reception of Holy Communion. He is also present spiritually in the soul that perseveres in the state of grace. Sacramental Communion is the greatest thing that can happen to us because Our Lord comes to dwell in the soul with His true Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity. But there is also such a thing as a Spiritual Communion which happens when we are filled with the desire to receive Our Lord sacramentally but are unable to do so.

When Christ is present in the soul, He is not alone. He is there with the angels and saints. He is there with His Blessed Mother. He is there with the Holy Trinity. And in this temple of the Trinity which is the Christian soul in the state of grace, with Mary we learn to adore God dwelling within us.



FOURTH SUNDAY OF ADVENT

20TH DECEMBER 2020

GOSPEL LUKE 1:26-38

The angel Gabriel was sent from God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary. And he came to her and said, "Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered in her mind what sort of greeting this might be. And the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favour with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end." And Mary said to the angel, "How will this be, since I have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy, the Son of God. And behold, your kinswoman Elizabeth in her old age has also conceived a son; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. For with God nothing will be impossible." And Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord; let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.



THE GOSPEL AND YOU

"Hail, full of grace, the Lord is with you!" These words of greeting were uttered by the angel Gabriel who announced to Mary that She had been chosen to be the Mother of the Saviour, the Son of the Most High.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches that "To become the mother of the Saviour, Mary 'was enriched by God with gifts appropriate to such a role'" (CCC 490). This teaching is proclaimed in the dogma of the Immaculate Conception which declares that "The most Blessed Virgin Mary was, from the first moment of her conception, by a singular grace and privilege of almighty God and by virtue of the merits of Jesus Christ, Saviour of the human race, preserved immune from all stain of original sin" (Pius IX, *Ineffabilis Deus*).

The angel's greeting, "Hail, full of grace", is the only biblical instance where an angel addresses someone by a title instead of a personal name. and the original Greek expression for full of grace indicates that God has already "graced" Mary previous to this point, making her a vessel who "has been" and "is now" filled with divine life. Mary received an abundance of grace, not only to prepare her for the role of being the Mother of God but also that She may become for us a model and example of Christian holiness.

And when Mary understood what God was asking of Her, She pronounced Her Fiat and manifested her desire to accept God's invitation to give birth to the Saviour: "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord let it be to me according to your word." And in that very moment the Second Person of the Most Holy Trinity took human form in Mary's womb.

Each time we say the Angelus prayer, we commemorate this sublime mystery of the Incarnation of Christ in Mary's womb. This prayer is meant to be said thrice daily and each time we pray it, let us meditate on Mary's humility and the love of Christ for us who took up our human nature to save us from sin.





FEAST OF THE HOLY FAMILY 27TH DECEMBER 2020

GOSPEL LUKE 2:22-40

When the time came for their purification according to the law of Moses, the parents of Jesus brought him up to Jerusalem to present him to the Lord
And when they had performed everything according to the law of the Lord, they returned into Galilee, to their own city, Nazareth.
And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.

THE GOSPEL AND YOU

“And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favour of God was upon him.” Even though He was the God, Christ did not refuse to submit Himself in obedience to His parents allowing Himself to be guided and educated by them. He submitted Himself to the authority of His earthly parents because this was the Father’s will.

Jesus Christ spent His childhood under the discipline of his parents, and this was a preparation for his mission. But at the same time, we can also imagine the devotion and love which Mary and Joseph showed towards the Divine Infant. Most certainly, He must have been the centre of family life both Mary and Joseph never wasted any opportunities spent in the company of Jesus. What a grace it must have been to live under the same roof with God Himself.

Christ came to earth to save and sanctify souls and He began in a family. The Christian life, which is the only life that makes one truly happy begins in the family must be fostered in the family. A certain famous preacher once said that preserving Christian family life is the necessary condition for preserving a Christian society. Failure to place Christ at the centre of family life would only eventually lead to the destruction of society as a whole.

The childhood of Christ, under the discipline of his parents was a preparation for his mission. Christian families offer that safe and healthy environment where children can grow in God’s love. God must be at the centre of family life and family prayer helps to keep God at the centre. For this reason it is vital that moments of family prayer be encouraged and maintained such as grace before and after meals, the angelus at midday and at 6pm, the family Rosary and attendance at Sunday Mass together as a family. For as Fr. Peyton, the founder of the Family Rosary Crusade, would often say: “The family that prays together, stays together”.

AHOY! MV GULF LIVESTOCK 1



➤ Stella Maris' assistance to the families left behind and survivors

Gulf Livestock 1 was a cargo ship sailing from Napier (New Zealand) to Jingtang, Tangshan (China). On the 2nd of September 2020 it sank in the Sea of Japan near the island of Amami Ōshima after experiencing engine problems amid the raging typhoon Maysak. The ship was carrying around 6000 livestock and 43 crew members, 39 Filipinos, 2 Australians and 2 New Zealanders. The families of the Filipino crew members are from the 3 Regions in the Philippines: 15, from the Luzon Island (Northern part of the Philippines); 19, from the Visayas Region (Central Region) and 5 from Mindanao (Southern Region).

Soon after the accident Stella Maris-Manila received a request for help from one family whose member was onboard. Beginning from this request, Stella Maris built up the list of the crew. Meanwhile the rescue operation was underway and as of today, 40 are still missing, 2 survived and 1 passed away.

On October 2, Stella Maris-Manila called for a meeting among the family members and the Stella Maris-Philippines chaplains. The following services were offered for free to the affected families through the local Stella Maris chaplains or directors as part of

Stella Maris's mission to aid Seafarers and their families:

- 1) Communication and dialogue with the families affected in the Philippines, Australia and New Zealand;
- 2) Invitation to pray and personal faith nurturing: regardless of religion or denomination one belongs to. We singled out the importance of being anchored in God's hands during these challenging and difficult moments;
- 3) Legal assistance: Stella Maris chaplains are not lawyers; therefore, we planned to entrust this service to international experts who are working on a pro bono basis to support the families in whatever decision they take;
- 4) Psychological and emotional healing was entrusted to UGAT Foundation, a professional team based in Metro Manila but with counselors in the 3 Regions in the Philippines; the counselors also possess different languages skills and financially supported by Stella Maris;



- 5) Financial assistance: The Holy See pledged financial assistance to each family thru the Dicastery for promoting Human Integral Development of the Holy See; the beneficiaries of the Pope's charity are the families of the crewmembers of the ship;
- 6) Visit to the families and survivors: it came lately as some families expressed the desire and willingness to receive Stella Maris staff.

Stella Maris – Philippines is still providing all these services; at the same time, we are monitoring the developments of the families' legal approach; second, we are regularly updated by the counselors; third, the distribution of the financial assistance given by the Holy see shall take place within the months of November and December; fourth, visit to the families and survivors, where protocols allow.

It has not been an easy journey for the families and welfare service providers, like Stella Maris. We thank all those who are offering their support and care to the families and survivors.



“The economic aid, in collaboration with the apostolic nunciatures and the Stella Maris of the Philippines, Australia, and New Zealand, will be delivered personally to the families of the missing persons and the two survivors, together with a small personal gift from Pope Francis, to demonstrate his closeness and solidarity,” (Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development)

FEASTS AND SEASONS



The Liturgical Calendar

Some may have childhood memories of summertime outings to the seashore, visits to sandy beaches to build sand castles and to dip our toes in water warmed by the summer sun. While the summer season may stretch on for months in some countries, in my native Canada, it is the long cold winters that often come to mind when I think of my childhood. Yet, the freezing temperatures did not deter us! We bundled up and trudged through snow drifts to our local ice rink where we met up with friends to enjoy ice hockey or figure skating lessons. Most often, we were practising and looking forward to the local figure skating carnival or the next hockey tournament on the schedule.

While the different seasons prompt us to live a certain way and to celebrate special events, a calendar helps us keep track of the days, weeks and months that comprise each season. Very importantly, it helps us to order our daily activities and to prepare for those special occasions.

The Church, too, has a calendar for a similar purpose: to help us order our lives as children of God. Known as a 'liturgical Calendar', it highlights the various seasons to help us prepare for the three most important celebrations in our Christian faith: Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. In the same way that our weekly participation in the Church's liturgy is intended to transform us, we are invited to live liturgically day-by-day to be transformed, to become more Christ-like in the course of daily living. In short, we are called to unite ourselves to Christ, to deepen our special friendships with him and his community of followers, the saints, not just on Sundays but daily.

The season of Advent

The liturgical year begins with the season of Advent (derived from the Latin meaning 'coming') which includes the four weeks preceding the celebration of Christmas. All around us, people are quick to get into the Christmas spirit – shopping and going to parties.

Yet, we are called to slow down, to recall that we were given the virtue of hope at our Baptism to help us fix our gaze on our ultimate goal: eternal happiness in God, our Father's loving embrace. Hearing accounts from the Old Testament in the Sunday Readings, we are called to join with our ancestors in hopeful waiting as we prepare our homes and our hearts for the birth of Christ. During this time, our churches and our homes are adorned with purple as a sign that we are preparing for the great feast of Christmas.

“Therefore, rather than racing through December in a frenzy, let's joyfully focus ourselves on the preparing for the gift of Christ himself, his coming among us”

A forgotten Season

With the Christmas decorations in the shops from early autumn, the season of Advent can be easily overlooked. While the four weeks preceding Christmas are already busy especially for families with young children, it not so much about adding to an already lengthy list of Christmas preparations but choosing to enter into the season – to look on those activities that we choose to do through the lens of faith.

Many businesses know how important it is to step back from time- to-time in order to refocus on business objectives. Even some parents usher in the New Year with a look at their family plans and priorities for the coming year. In a fashion, the Church begins its liturgical year by inviting us to do the same - to contemplate not just our short-term goals but our end goal, happiness not just in this lifetime but for all eternity. At our Baptism, we were gifted with the virtue of hope and called to live hopefully, joyfully, knowing that Christ, who loves us immeasurably, is our Lord and Saviour.

Therefore, rather than racing through December in a frenzy, let's joyfully focus ourselves on the preparing for the gift of Christ himself, his coming among us.

We can look at the stories of the Old Testament from creation to the birth of Christ, recalling the sacred promises that God made to the Chosen people and to each of us.

Alternatively, an Advent calendar with biblical verses behind each window makes a helpful aid to spark conversation, to explore the idea of expectant waiting, hoping for a Messiah just as those living in the centuries before the birth of Christ. We might

enjoy Advent music including favourites such as O Come O Come Emmanuel among others that are available on Youtube and other platforms.

Perhaps more than any other, nothing speaks of Advent more so than the crèche with the empty manger. The baby Jesus figure is carefully hidden away until Christmas morning.

An advent wreath on the dinner table is another way of making the season visible in our homes. Increasing our prayer time during Advent might be the addition of a daily Morning Offering or a Daily Examen to help us prepare our hearts. A visit to the sacrament of Reconciliation if possible is ideal preparation for the celebration of Christmas.

The season of Christmas or Christmastide

As Christians, we don't celebrate the great feast of Christmas just for one day but for a whole season that concludes with the Baptism of Christ, the Sunday after the feast of the Epiphany. Over the twelve days from Christmas through to the Feast of the Epiphany (6th January) when the three kings visited the Christ child in the stable, we gather with family and loved ones to celebrate Jesus who came among us, taking on our humanity so that we may once again share in his divinity.

By Margaret Wickware





An Advent Hymn

O come, O come, Emmanuel
And ransom captive Israel
That mourns in lonely exile here
Until the Son of God appear
Rejoice! Rejoice! Emmanuel
Shall come to thee, O Israel



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