

ADVENT – A PROLOGUE

Prepare ye the way is an ancient call.ⁱ It comes to us from out the Book of Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah, who lived eight hundred years before the coming of the Lord in Bethlehem of Judah, did not pen the words that open chapter 40 of the book which bears his name. But his conviction that God would visit his people and deliver them from the evils of oppression from without and corruption within inspired generation after generation to hope. When it seemed that exile in Babylon (597–39 B.C.) was about to end as Middle Eastern imperial might and political alignments took a new turn, those who carried throughout the centuries Isaiah’s lantern of hope broke into glorious song, an Advent song: *Prepare Ye the Way of the LORD*. Dare we to hope that the day is dawning? Will the desert song of a lone singer be heard? Listen:

A voice cries out:

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

Every valley shall be lifted up,

and every mountain and hill be made low;

the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places plain.

Then the glory of the LORD shall be revealed,

And all people shall see it together;

For the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

Isaiah 40:1-5ⁱⁱ

The call to prepare, to go imaginatively into the desert of reflection and prayer reverberated through yet more centuries until on Jordan's banks the Baptist's cry stirred the ancient expectation and called those who flocked to him to enter the waters of a cleansing baptism to ready themselves for the powerful one who comes with the Holy Spirit of God (Mark 1:1-8). Jesus himself comes from Nazareth of Galilee to the river to be baptised by John (Mark 1:9-11). Between the cry of the messenger in the wilderness (1:2) and the opening of the heavens to greet the beloved Son (1:11), our Advent and Christmas scriptures tell the story of expectation and coming. We are called into the drama, waiting and longing, then welcoming, celebrating, and being ordained, as Jesus was, into service of he who is called to be King. The purpose of this programme for Advent and Christmastide is to enlighten every step of the way from the desert to the crib, from the crib to the baptism of the Son.

ⁱ The King James Bible of 1611 still has power to stir our imaginations and its cadences often catch the moment more poetically than our modern, more accurate, translations.

ⁱⁱ The reading from Isaiah 40:1-11, with slight variations, occurs on the Second Sunday of Advent Year B; Tuesday in the Second Week of Advent; and on the Sunday after 6 January, on which is observed the feast day of the Baptism of Our Lord Year C.

A PROGRAMME FOR ADVENT AND CHRISTMASTIDE

ADVENT TO BAPTISM : LIVING THE CRIB

Making a Crib : Making a Church

Start assembling the Crib on the First Sunday of Advent in readiness for placing the Infant there at Midnight Mass. The Building of the Crib should be a catechetical programme which proclaims the reality of the Incarnation and its meaning. It is the divine expression of divine love and mercy. It expresses God's determination to hold all of humanity in the hollow of his hand.

First Sunday of Advent

Materials

Bible, Angels,
Lamp, Star, Ox, Ass straw,
manger

On the First Sunday of Advent begin to build the Crib. This is best done before the altar or close to it. This is to show that Incarnation of the Son, the Word made Flesh, is made present to us in Word and Sacrament at Lectern and Altar. The Crib should not be in an inconspicuous place.

Homily Theme: **God** in the words of Scripture and in signs and symbols is preparing the way for the coming of the Lord.

Second Sunday of Advent

Shepherds, Magi
(Place the shepherds in Church at some distance from the Crib site to show that they are travelling. As the Sundays go by, move them nearer.)

Homily Theme: **HUMANITY** (Jew and Gentile) is longing for the coming of the Lord.

Third Sunday of Advent

Joseph

Homily Theme: Joseph whose dreams reveal who is coming into our world, who reveals the One who takes away our sins, the One who is Emmanuel, God-with-Us for now and forever more.

Fourth Sunday of Advent

Mary

Homily Theme: Mary, our Mother, mothers us with her Son. With Elizabeth we rejoice and with her we proclaim: How is it with me that the Mother of my Lord should come to Me?

Christmas Eve and Christmas Day

Infant Jesus

Homily Themes: The Coming of God's Son: Joy to the World!

Feast of Holy Family

This should be a celebration, first of the human family, a family visited and sustained by God's Emmanuel. Secondly, we need to emphasise that the family of Jesus is not made up of three people but of at least NINE people. They are:

Parents: Joseph and Mary

Children: Jesus, James, Joseph, Judas, Simon, and at least two girls.

This is clear from Mark 6:3; Matthew 13:55.

I am not questioning either the Virgin Conception or the Incarnation of the Son. But running around the place in Nazareth were a lot of kids needing to be fed and cared for.

Make this day a day for families, remembering that those of us who have no children belong/belonged to a family sometime in our lives. But the main thing is that we all belong to the Family of God and God has responsibility for all of us in this world and the next.

Baptism of the Lord

The day should be a celebration of our Baptism. Invite all who had a child recently baptized. Invite all children to a joyful celebration. Invite all parents and grandparents to celebrate with their children. Sprinkle with lots of water. Sign of Peace with big hugs. And afterwards plenty of Tea and Cakes. And a Singsong. Or whatever.

And a reminder that we are baptized in order to baptize the world. As *Evangelii Gaudium* reminds us all.

Joseph O'Hanlon

Songs for Entry Hymn for Each Advent Sunday
as
Crib is Assembled

WERE YOU THERE? Preparing the way ADVENT: FIRST SUNDAY

Were you there when the star shone in the sky?
Were you there when the star shone in the sky?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the star shone in the sky? **Matthew 2:3**

Were you there when they opened up the Book?
Were you there when they opened up the Book?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they opened up the Book? **Matthew 1:1**

Were you there when the Prophets spoke the Word?
Were you there when the Prophets spoke the Word?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the Prophets spoke the Word? **Matthew 1:**

Were you there when the LORD prepared the Way?
Were you there when the LORD prepared the Way?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the LORD prepared the Way? **Mark 1:1-2**

Were you there when the angels came to call?
Were you there when the angels came to call?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the angels came to call? **Luke 1:11**

WERE YOU THERE? Calling the Nations ADVENT: SECOND SUNDAY

Were you there when Saint Matthew told his tale?
Were you there when Saint Matthew told his tale?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Saint Matthew told his tale? **Matthew 1:1**

Were you there when he called out all the names?
Where you there when he called out all the names?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when he called out all the names? **Matthew 1:1-17**

Were you there when the Magi saw their star?
Were you there when the Magi saw their star?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the Magi saw their star? **Matthew 2:2**

Were you there when Saint Luke began his songs?
Were you there when Saint Luke began his songs?
Oh-Oh-Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Saint Luke began his songs? **Luke 1:46-79**

Were you there with the shepherds in the fields?
Were you there with the shepherds in the fields?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there with the shepherds in the field? **Luke 2:8**

Were you there when old Gabriel came to call?
Were you there when told Gabriel came to call?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when old Gabriel came to call? **Luke 1:19**

WERE YOU THERE? Saint Joseph ADVENT: THIRD SUNDAY

Were you there when young Joseph had his dreams?
Where you there when young Joseph had his dreams?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Joseph had his dreams? **Matthew 1:18-25**

Were you there when Emmanu'el got his name?
Were you there when Emmanu'el got his name?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Emmanu'el got his name? **Matthew 1:23**

Were you there when young Joseph woke from sleep?
Were you there when young Joseph woke from sleep?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Joseph woke from sleep? **Matthew 1:24**

Were you there when young Joseph said he would?
Were you there when young Joseph said he would?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Joseph said he would. **Matthew 1:24-25**

Were you there when he took his Mary home?
Were you there when he took his Mary home?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when he took his Mary home? **Matthew 1:24-25**

WERE YOU THERE? Mary ADVENT: FOURTH SUNDAY

When you there when young Mary heard the word?
Were you there when young Mary heard the word?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Mary heard the word? **Luke 1:26**

Were you there when Gabriel called her blest?
Were you there when Gabriel called her blest?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Gabriel called her blest?

Were you there when she pondered at the call?
Were you there when she pondered at the call?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when she pondered at the call? **Luke 1:29**

Were you there when young Mary said 'I will!'
Were you there when young Mary said 'I will!'
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Mary said 'I will!?' **Luke 1:38**

Were you there when Elizabeth had her child?
Were you there when Elizabeth had her child?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Elizabeth had her child? **Luke 1:57-80**

Were you there when young Mary sang her song?
Were you there when young Mary sang her song?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when young Mary sang her song? **Luke 1:46-55**

CHRISTMAS

WERE YOU THERE?

MIDNIGHT MASS

Were you there when the child began to cry?
Were you there when the child began to cry?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the child began to cry? **Luke 2:6-7**

Were you there when they laid him in the manger?
Were you there when they laid him in the manger?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they laid him in the manger? **Luke 2:7**

Were you there when the angels sang their song?
Were you there when the angels sang their song?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the angels sang their song? **Luke 2:13**

Were you there when the shepherds saw their Lord?
Were you there when the shepherds saw their Lord?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the shepherds saw their Lord? **Luke 2:11**

Were you there when God's glory shone around?
Were you there when God's glory shone around?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when God's glory shone around? **Luke 2:9**

CHRISTMAS

This is the Day

MASS OF THE DAY

Were you there when she swaddled Christ the Lord?
Were you there when she swaddled Christ the Lord?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when she swaddled Christ the Lord? **Luke 2:7 and 12**

Were you there when the shepherds told their tale?
Were you there when the shepherds told their tale?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when the shepherds told their tale? **Luke 2:17-20**

Were you there when they glorified the LORD?
Were you there when they glorified the LORD?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when they glorified the LORD? **Luke 2:14**

Were you there when God's glory shone around?
Were you there when God's glory shone around?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when God's glory shone around? **Luke 2:9**

Were you there when Peace came to the earth?
Were you there when Peace came to the earth?
Oh-Oh! Oh-Oh! Sometimes it causes me to tremble, tremble, tremble.
Were you there when Peace came to the earth? **Luke 2:14**

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OGF
