



ABSOLUTE ADVENT

A GUIDE TO LIVING OUT ADVENT FULLY IN OUR
SCHOOL COMMUNITY
FOR PUPILS, PARENTS & STAFF

THE IMPORTANCE OF ADVENT

BY FR. PAUL DENNEY (SCHOOL CHAPLAIN)

Advent is a season to prepare ourselves for Christmas. This year it lasts from Sunday 1st December until Tuesday 24th December, so is only about three and a half weeks long – that’s not a lot of time to prepare!

Though we take part in many joyful things in the lead up to Christmas, such as buying presents for our family and friends, decorating our homes, going to parties; there is a lot more to Christmas than all these things.

Christmas is about Christ entering our world. It is about God coming so near to us as to become one of us in Jesus Christ. God chose to be born in poverty, in a stable, as a tiny, vulnerable little baby; that’s how much he loves us and trusts us to let him enter into our hearts at Christmas.

Advent, then, is an expectant waiting, a hopeful anticipation, and a joyful preparation for God coming into our hearts and lives, both in the present and the future. Advent is a season of joyful waiting and expectation; it is not a season to stress out by rushing around shopping, pacing towards the 25th December, and only getting organised in a material way for Christmas. Advent is about preparing our hearts to receive a special guest, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who is born again for us at Christmas.

SO HOW SHOULD WE PREPARE FOR CHRISTMAS PROPERLY?

If we arrive at Christmas Day and are already fed up with Christmas, something has gone wrong with our Advent preparation!

So too, if we wake up on Boxing Day and think “that’s it over for another year”, we’ve definitely missed the point.

To make sure that this doesn’t happen to us, and that we arrive at Christmas bursting with joy at the birth of Jesus, and carry that joy forward into the New Year, there are some spiritual things we can do as individuals and together as a school community.

Here are three great ways to add meaning to our Advent and preparation for Christmas:

- 1. Spend some extra time in prayer each day.**
- 2. Come to Mass in the school oratory.**
- 3. Go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation and make a good Confession.**



PRAYER

We are very fortunate to have a beautiful oratory in the heart of our school. The oratory is open every day, and Jesus waits for you in the Blessed Sacrament to come to him and place all the joys and worries of your lives before Him.

During Advent there will be a special time of prayer offered every Tuesday morning between 8.30-8.55am when we have Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament.

This is when the Eucharist, the real presence of Jesus, is taken out of the tabernacle and put in a special container called a monstrance, so that everyone can see Jesus face to face. Even if it is just for a short time, take the opportunity to visit the oratory and spend some quiet moments in prayer with the Lord.

Parent & Carers are very welcome to join us for Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament on Tuesday mornings.

"The key that opens the door to the faith is prayer" (Pope Francis)



HOLY MASS

The Mass is the most precious and important moment for us as Catholics. In every Mass God speaks to us through his word in sacred scripture, and our Lord Jesus Christ is made truly present when the bread and wine are consecrated and transformed into his Body and Blood.

God does not stand at a distance from us and our lives, he comes so close to us that we can not only come into his real presence at Mass, but we even receive him into our hearts and souls in Holy Communion. This is the best way to come closer to God in the season of Advent.

During Advent we will have two Masses each week in school:

- Mass is celebrated every Tuesday lunchtime at 12.30pm, and is always finished for 12.50pm, so you still have time to get lunch.
- There will also be a special Mass each Wednesday morning at 8.30am called a Rorate Mass (pronounced ro-ra-tay), which we celebrate by candlelight in honour of Our Blessed Mother Mary.
- The celebration of these Masses is a very old Christian tradition going back to the 8th century. All members of the school community are very welcome to participate in this beautiful tradition going back 1,200 years.
- *Parent & Carers are very welcome to join us for the morning Rorate Mass*



THE SACRAMENT OF RECONCILIATION

WHY SHOULD I GO?

The Sacrament was given to us by Jesus himself so that we would not have to carry the weight and guilt of the sins we commit, but rather have them completely forgiven and wiped away by Jesus in the sacrament. When we go to Confession, although the priest is present, we are actually coming directly to God, and it is God who forgives us our sins through the priest. This is very similar to the Mass where God works through the priest to change the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus, so too in Confession it is God himself who forgives our sins.

CAN'T I JUST TELL GOD PRIVATELY THAT I'M SORRY FOR MY SINS?

It is a good thing for all of us each day to examine our conscience, that is to think through our day and be thankful to God for the good things we have enjoyed that day, and also to call to mind the things that haven't been so good, especially times that we have sinned against God or other people, and to ask for forgiveness. However this exercise, as good as it is, doesn't compare to actually going to confession. Just as in the Mass, Jesus is really present in the Sacrament of Confession and he lovingly waits for us to come to him, to tell him openly and honestly the things we have done wrong, and to ask for forgiveness and healing.

No friendship can survive without friends coming together face to face and spending time with each; so too, we should not deny ourselves the chance to come personally to Jesus, place our struggles and sins before him, and know that He wipes them all away and restores us to our dignity as sons and daughters of God. Remember the forgiveness we receive in Confession is immediate and entire, we don't have to wait for it to start working like medicine, nor do we have to wonder if we have actually been forgiven. In the sacrament Jesus himself says "I absolve you from your sins"; everything is wiped away, nothing sticks to us, we are washed clean in his love.

RECONCILIATION AFTERNOON

All pupils will have the opportunity to go to the Sacrament of Reconciliation on

**Wednesday 11th December 1.15pm- 3.00pm
(periods 5&6).**

Thereafter, from 3pm -4pm for staff.

Several priests will be available, so you can be completely anonymous if you want. To go to Confession and ask God's forgiveness for any sins we may have committed, especially if we haven't been for a while or there is a particular sin that is hanging over us, it an amazing way to prepare our hearts and souls for Christ's coming at Christmas.

I wish each one of you, your families and friends a happy and holy Advent season, and all the lasting joys of Christmas when Christ is born again for us!

Fr. Paul



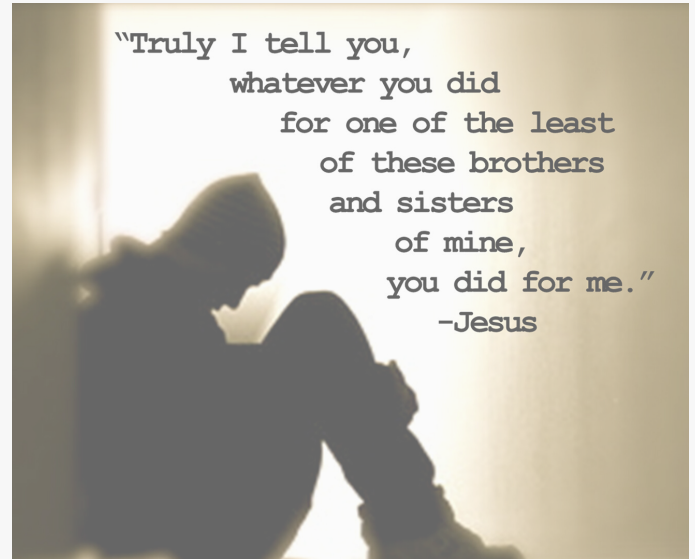
ADVENT ACTS OF CHARITY

BY MRS. BARR (PRINCIPAL TEACHER OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION)

It is easy during Advent to get caught up with the excitement of Christmas approaching. We shop for gifts, write lists of things we would like to receive as Christmas presents, we plan nice meals and special trips and treats. All of these things make Christmas enjoyable, but it is our Christian duty to remember to make time for those less fortunate. This does not only apply to those experiencing financial hardship, but also to those who suffer in other ways, such as through loneliness and ill-health.

ANNUAL ADVENT APPEAL

Each year in our school we are invited to make a special effort to be generous in our giving to charity. This is especially the case in R.E. when pupils set a class target which they aim to reach by the end of Advent. Money raised has helped a variety of initiatives to allow those less fortunate to enjoy a Christmas treat too! This has enabled us to help local families through donations to the Christmas hampers distributed by 'You're Welcome' the home & clothing bank based in Viewpark. We have also donated toiletries and chocolates to Portman Street Hostel in Glasgow where Miss Turner volunteers her own time to help feed the homeless men who use the facilities there. S2 Social Subject pupils also make Christmas Cards which are gratefully received by the men there - most often these are the only cards and gifts they receive!



CARITAS CHRISTMAS MISSION

Your Advent donations also fund the Christmas Mission led by annually by S6 Caritas pupils who prepare gifts & winter essentials and distribute these to the homeless on the streets of Glasgow city centre during the last week of term. As a group, we always begin this evening in Glasgow with a visit to the statue of 'Homeless Jesus'. Here, we reflect on the words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew (25:31-46) and are inspired to put the works of mercy into action.

Please be as generous as you can and take part in fundraising activities during Advent. Departments are invited to donate toiletries & winter woollies which will be collected by Caritas pupils before 9th December or can be sent to the R.E. Dept.

Thank you all in advance. Your donations allow us to live out the Gospel Values in our school community this Advent.