



Advent & Christmas

With
Pope Benedict XVI

COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS ■ UNITED STATES CONFERENCE OF CATHOLIC BISHOPS

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United States Conference of Catholic Bishops
Washington, D.C.

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NOVEMBER 28, 2010



First Sunday of Advent

Readings: Is 2:1-5; Rom 13:11-14; Mt 24:37-44

“Come, let us climb the LORD’s mountain,
to the house of the God of Jacob,
that he may instruct us in his ways,
and we may walk in his paths.”

Is 2:3

Advent, this powerful liturgical season that we are beginning, invites us to pause in silence to understand a presence. It is an invitation to understand that the individual events of the day are hints that God is giving us signs of the attention he has for each one of us. How often does God give us a glimpse of his love!

*Homily in Celebration of First Vespers of Advent
November 28, 2009*

NOVEMBER 29, 2010



Monday of the First Week of Advent

Readings: Is 4:2-6; Mt 8:5-11

For over all, the LORD's glory will be shelter and protection:
shade from the parching heat of day,
refuge and cover from storm and rain.

Is 4:6

The hope expressed is that each one may be made holy by God and preserved irreproachable in his entire person—“spirit, soul and body”—for the final coming of the Lord Jesus; the guarantee that this can happen is offered by the faithfulness of God himself, who will not fail to bring to completion the work he has begun in believers.

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers of the
First Sunday of Advent
November 26, 2005*

NOVEMBER 30, 2010



Feast of St. Andrew, Apostle

Readings: Rom 10:9-18; Mt 4:18-22

[Jesus] said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Mt 4:19

What does the Lord want of me? Of course, this is always a great adventure, but life can be successful only if we have the courage to be adventurous, trusting that the Lord will never leave me alone, that the Lord will go with me and help me.

*Meeting with Youth in Rome Before the
Twenty-first World Youth Day
April 6, 2006*

DECEMBER 1, 2010



Wednesday of the First Week of Advent

Readings: Is 25:6-10a; Mt 15:29-37

On that day it will be said:

“Behold our God, to whom we looked to save us!

This is the LORD for whom we looked;

let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!”

Is 25:9

We should ask ourselves what does “coming of the Lord” mean? In Greek it is “parousia,” in Latin “adventus,” “advent,” “coming.” What is this “coming”? Does it involve us or not?

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers of the
First Sunday of Advent
November 26, 2005*

DECEMBER 2, 2010



Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Readings: Is 26:1-6; Mt 7:21, 24-27

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.”

Mt 7:24

Yet there is not only the final coming at the end of time: in a certain sense the Lord always wants to come through us. And he knocks at the door of our hearts: are you willing to give me your flesh, your time, your life?

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers of the
First Sunday of Advent, November 26, 2005*

DECEMBER 3, 2010



Memorial of St. Francis Xavier, priest

Readings: Is 29:17-24; Mt 9:27-31

They went out and spread word of him through all that land.

Mt 9:31

The Church is missionary by nature and her principal task is evangelization, which aims to proclaim and to witness to Christ and to promote his Gospel of peace and love in every environment and culture.

*Address to Participants in the Fifth International
Congress of Military Ordinariates, October 26, 2006*

DECEMBER 4, 2010



Saturday of the First Week of Advent

Readings: Is 30:19-21, 23-26; Mt 9:35-10:1, 5a, 6-8

The Lord will give you the bread you need
and the water for which you thirst.

No longer will your Teacher hide himself,
but with your own eyes you shall see your Teacher.

Is 30:20

Advent, therefore, is a favourable time for the rediscovery of a hope that is not vague and deceptive but certain and reliable, because it is “anchored” in Christ, God made man, the rock of our salvation.

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers of the
First Sunday of Advent, December 1, 2007*

DECEMBER 5, 2010



Second Sunday of Advent

Readings: Is 11:1-10; Rom 15:4-9; Mt 3:1-12

Justice shall be the band around his waist,
and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.
Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb,
and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;
the calf and the young lion shall browse together,
with a little child to guide them.

Is 11:5-6

Advent is particularly suited to being a season lived in communion with all those who—and thanks be to God they are numerous—hope for a more just and a more fraternal world. In this commitment to justice, people of every nationality and culture, believers and non-believers, can to a certain extent meet. Indeed, they are all inspired by a common desire, even if their motivations are different, for a future of justice and peace.

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers
of the First Sunday of Advent, December 2, 2006*

DECEMBER 6, 2010



Monday of the Second Week of Advent

Readings: Is 35:1-10; Lk 5:17-26

“But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins”—he said to the one who was paralyzed, “I say to you, rise, pick up your stretcher, and go home.”

Lk 5:24

Christ is “the hand” of God stretched out to humanity, to rescue it from the quicksands of illness and death so that it can stand on the firm rock of divine love.

Angelus
February 12, 2006

DECEMBER 7, 2010



Memorial of St. Ambrose,
bishop and doctor of the Church

Readings: Is 40:1-11; Mt 18:12-14

Like a shepherd he feeds his flock;
in his arms he gathers the lambs,
Carrying them in his bosom,
and leading the ewes with care.

Is 40:11

Culturally well-educated but at the same time ignorant of the Scriptures, [St. Ambrose] briskly began to study them. From the works of Origen, the indisputable master of the “Alexandrian School,” he learned to know and to comment on the Bible. Thus, Ambrose transferred to the Latin environment the meditation on the Scriptures which Origen had begun, introducing in the West the practice of *lectio divina*. The method of *lectio* served to guide all of Ambrose’s preaching and writings, which stemmed precisely from *prayerful listening* to the Word of God.

General Audience
October 24, 2007

DECEMBER 8, 2010



Solemnity of the Immaculate
Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Readings: Gn 3:9-15, 20; Eph 1:3-6, 11-12; Lk 1:26-38

Mary said, "Behold, I am the handmaid of the Lord. May it be done to me according to your word."

Lk 1:38

To reflect upon the Immaculate Conception of Mary is thus to allow oneself to be attracted by the "yes" which joined her wonderfully to the mission of Christ, Redeemer of humanity; it is to allow oneself to be taken and led by her hand to pronounce in one's turn "fiat" to the will of God, with all one's existence interwoven with joys and sadness, hopes and disappointments, in the awareness that tribulations, pain and suffering make rich the meaning of our pilgrimage on the earth.

*Message for the Sixteenth World Day of the Sick
January 11, 2008*

DECEMBER 9, 2010



Thursday of the
Second Week of Advent

Readings: Is 41:13-20; Mt 11:11-15

I am the LORD, your God,
 who grasp your right hand;
It is I who say to you, "Fear not,
 I will help you."

Is 41:13

Advent is the spiritual season of hope par excellence, and
in it the whole Church is called to become hope, for
herself and for the world.

*Homily in Celebration of the First Vespers of the
First Sunday of Advent, November 29, 2008*

DECEMBER 10, 2010



Friday of the Second Week of Advent

Readings: Is 48:17-19; Mt 11:16-19

I, the LORD, your God,
teach you what is for your good,
and lead you on the way you should go.

Is 48:17

Advent becomes an opportunity to reawaken within ourselves the true meaning of waiting, returning to the heart of our faith which is the mystery of Christ, the Messiah who was expected for long centuries and was born in poverty, in Bethlehem.

*Homily in Celebration of First Vespers of Advent
November 28, 2009*

DECEMBER 11, 2010



Saturday of the
Second Week of Advent

Readings: Sir 48:1-4, 9-11; Mt 17:9a, 10-13

[Jesus] said in reply, "Elijah will indeed come and restore all things; but I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him but did to him whatever they pleased. So also will the Son of Man suffer at their hands."

Mt 17:11-12

The Son of God has already come to Bethlehem about twenty centuries ago, he comes in each moment in the soul and in the community disposed to receive him, he will come again at the end of time "to judge the living and the dead."

Angelus
December 2, 2007

DECEMBER 12, 2010



Third Sunday of Advent

Readings: Is 35:1-6a, 10; Jas 5:7-10; Mt 11:2-11

Here is your God,
 he comes with vindication;
with divine recompense
 he comes to save you.

Is 35:4

Christian joy thus springs from this certainty: God is close, he is with me, he is with us, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as a friend and faithful spouse.

Angelus
December 16, 2007

DECEMBER 13, 2010



Memorial of St. Lucy, virgin and martyr

Readings: Nm 24:2-7, 15-17a; Mt 21:23-27

A star shall advance from Jacob,
and a staff shall rise from Israel.

Nm 24:17a

God became the Son of Man so that we might become
children of God.

Angelus
December 23, 2007

DECEMBER 14, 2010



Memorial of St. John of the Cross,
priest and doctor of the Church

Readings: Zep 3:1-2, 9-13; Mt 21:28-32

When the just cry out, the LORD hears them,
and from all their distress he rescues them.
The LORD is close to the brokenhearted;
and those who are crushed in spirit he saves.

Ps 34:18-19

At the end of his life, St. John of the Cross loved to repeat that we will be judged on love. What is necessary even today, indeed, especially in this our epoch marked by so many human and spiritual challenges, is for Christians to proclaim with their works the merciful love of God! Every baptized person must “live the Gospel.” In fact, many people who do not welcome Christ and his exigent teachings easily are nevertheless sensitive to the witness of those who communicate his message through the concrete witness of charity.

*Address to Members of the Italian
Voluntary Service Organizations, February 10, 2007*

DECEMBER 15, 2010



Wednesday of the
Third Week of Advent

Readings: Is 45:6b-8, 18, 21b-25; Lk 7:18b-23

Jesus said to them in reply, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind regain their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the good news proclaimed to them.”

Lk 7:22

The Word of God is the subject that moves history, inspires the prophets, prepares the way for the Lord and convokes the Church. Jesus himself is the divine Word who was made flesh in Mary’s virginal womb: in him God was fully revealed, he told us, and gave us his all, offering to us the precious gifts of his truth and mercy.

Angelus

December 6, 2009

DECEMBER 16, 2010



Thursday of the
Third Week of Advent

Readings: Is 54:1-10; Lk 7:24-30

Though the mountains leave their place
and the hills be shaken,
My love shall never leave you
nor my covenant of peace be shaken,
says the LORD, who has mercy on you.

Is 54:10

Have the courage to dare with God! Try it! Do not be afraid of him! Have the courage to risk with faith! Have the courage to risk with goodness! Have the courage to risk with a pure heart! Commit yourselves to God, then you will see that it is precisely by doing so that your life will become broad and light, not boring but filled with infinite surprises, for God's infinite goodness is never depleted!

*Homily for the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the
Blessed Virgin Mary, December 8, 2005*

DECEMBER 17, 2010



Friday of the Third Week of Advent

Readings: Gn 49:2, 8-10; Mt 1:1-17

The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ,
the son of David, the son of Abraham.

Mt 1:1

Families . . . are the fundamental cell of every healthy society. Only in families, therefore, is it possible to create a communion of generations in which the memory of the past lives on in the present and is open to the future. Thus, life truly continues and progresses. Real progress is impossible without this continuity of life, and once again, it is impossible without the religious element. Without trust in God, without trust in Christ who in addition gives us the ability to believe and to live, the family cannot survive.

*Meeting with Members of the Roman Clergy
March 2, 2006*

DECEMBER 18, 2010



Saturday of the Third Week of Advent

Readings: Jer 23:5-8; Mt 1:18-25

When Joseph awoke, he did as the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took his wife into his home.

Mt 1:24

The silence of St. Joseph is given a special emphasis. His silence is steeped in contemplation of the mystery of God in an attitude of total availability to the divine desires. It is a silence thanks to which Joseph, in unison with Mary, watches over the Word of God, known through the Sacred Scriptures, continuously comparing it with the events of the life of Jesus; a silence woven of constant prayer, a prayer of blessing of the Lord, of the adoration of his holy will and of unreserved entrustment to his providence. It is no exaggeration to think that it was precisely from his “father” Joseph that Jesus learned—at the human level—that steadfast interiority which is a presupposition of authentic justice.

Angelus
December 18, 2005

DECEMBER 19, 2010



Fourth Sunday of Advent

Readings: Is 7:10-14; Rom 1:1-7; Mt 1:18-24

Through him we have received the grace of apostleship, to bring about the obedience of faith, for the sake of his name, among all the Gentiles, among whom are you also, who are called to belong to Jesus Christ; to all the beloved of God in Rome, called to be holy.

Rm 1:6-7a

The world needs God—not just any god but the God of Jesus Christ, the God who made himself flesh and blood, who loved us to the point of dying for us, who rose and created within himself room for man.

*Homily at Chrism Mass, Holy Thursday
April 13, 2006*

DECEMBER 20, 2010



Monday of the Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Is 7:10-14; Lk 1:26-38

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:
the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall name
him Emmanuel.

Is 7:14

Advent is par excellence the season of hope in which
believers in Christ are invited to remain in watchful and
active waiting, nourished by prayer and by the effective com-
mitment to love. May the approaching Nativity of Christ fill
the hearts of all Christians with joy, serenity and peace!

Angelus
December 3, 2006

DECEMBER 21, 2010



Tuesday of the Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Sg 2:8-14 or Zep 3:14-18a; Lk 1:39-45

“Blessed are you who believed that what was spoken to you by the Lord would be fulfilled.”

Lk 1:45

Mary went to see her elderly cousin Elizabeth, whom everyone said was sterile but who instead had reached the sixth month of a pregnancy given to her by God (cf. Lk 1:36), carrying in her womb the recently conceived Jesus. She was a young girl but she was not afraid, for God was with her, within her. . . . Jesus’ presence filled her with the Holy Spirit.

*Address at the Conclusion of the Marian Month
May 31, 2005*

DECEMBER 22, 2010



Wednesday of the
Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: 1 Sm 1:24-28; Lk 1:46-56

From this day all generations will call me blessed:
the Almighty has done great things for me,
and holy is his Name.

Lk 1:48b-49

Let us now turn our gaze again to Mary and Joseph who were awaiting the birth of Jesus and learn from them the secret of reflection in order to taste the joy of Christmas. Let us prepare ourselves to welcome with faith the Redeemer who comes to be with us, the Word of God's love for humanity of every epoch.

Angelus
December 21, 2008

DECEMBER 23, 2010



Thursday of the
Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: Mal 3:1-4, 23-24; Lk 1:57-66

Thus says the Lord GOD:
Lo, I am sending my messenger
to prepare the way before me.

Mal 3:1

While the joy of Christmas that we already anticipate fills us with hope, it spurs us at the same time to proclaim to everyone God's presence in our midst.

Angelus
December 23, 2007

DECEMBER 24, 2010



Friday of the Fourth Week of Advent

Readings: 2 Sm 7:1-5, 8b-12, 14a, 16; Lk 1:67-79

In the tender compassion of our God
the dawn from on high shall break upon us,
to shine on those who dwell in darkness
and the shadow of death,
and to guide our feet into the way of peace.”

Lk 1:78-79

Joy is the true gift of Christmas, not expensive presents that demand time and money. We can transmit this joy simply: with a smile, with a kind gesture, with some small help, with forgiveness. Let us give this joy and the joy given will be returned to us.

Homily for the Fourth Sunday of Advent

December 18, 2005

DECEMBER 25, 2010



Solemnity of the
Nativity of the Lord Christmas

Vigil Readings: Is 62:1-5; Acts 13:16-17, 22-25;

Mt 1:1-25 or 1:18-25 (13)

Midnight Readings: Is 9:1-6; Ti 2:11-14; Lk 2:1-14 (14)

Dawn Readings: Is 62:11-12; Ti 3:4-7; Lk 2:15-20 (15)

Day Readings: Is 52:7-10; Heb 1:1-6; Jn 1:1-18 or
1:1-5, 9-14 (16)

And the Word became flesh
and made his dwelling among us.

Jn 1:14

In being born among us, may the Child Jesus not find us distracted or merely busy, beautifying our houses with decorative lights. Rather, let us deck our soul and make our families a worthy dwelling place where he feels welcomed with faith and love.

*General Audience
December 20, 2006*

DECEMBER 26, 2010



Feast of the
Holy Family of Jesus, Mary, and Joseph

Readings: Sir 3:2-7, 12-14; Col 3:12-21 or 3:12-17;
Mt 2:13-15, 19-23

And over all these put on love,
that is, the bond of perfection.
And let the peace of Christ control your hearts,
the peace into which you were also called in one body.
And be thankful.

Col 3:14-15

Children need to be brought up in the faith, to be loved and protected. Along with their basic right to be born and to be raised in the faith, children also have the right to a home which takes as its model the home of Nazareth, and to be shielded from all dangers and threats.

*Address at the Prayer Vigil for the Fifth World Meeting of
Families in Valencia, Spain, July 8, 2006*

DECEMBER 27, 2010



Feast of St. John, Apostle and evangelist

Readings: 1 Jn 1:1-4; Jn 20:1a, 2-8

What we have seen and heard
we proclaim now to you,
so that you too may have fellowship with us;
for our fellowship is with the Father
and with his Son, Jesus Christ.

1 Jn 1:3

We become witnesses when, through our actions, words
and way of being, Another makes himself present.

Apostolic Exhortation The Sacrament of Charity
(Sacramentum Caritatis), no. 85, February 22, 2007

DECEMBER 28, 2010



Feast of the Holy Innocents, martyrs

Readings: 1 Jn 1:5-2:2; Mt 2:13-18

Then was fulfilled what had been said through Jeremiah the prophet:

*A voice was heard in Ramah,
sobbing and loud lamentation;
Rachel weeping for her children,
and she would not be consoled,
since they were no more.*

Mt 2:17-18

God's love does not differentiate between the newly conceived infant still in his or her mother's womb and the child or young person, or the adult and the elderly person. God does not distinguish between them because he sees an impression of his own image and likeness (Gn 1:26) in each one.

Address to the Participants at the Twelfth General Assembly of the Pontifical Academy for Life and Congress on "The Human Embryo in the Pre-Implantation Phase," February 27, 2006

DECEMBER 29, 2010



The Fifth Day in the
Octave of Christmas

Readings: 1 Jn 2:3-11; Lk 2:22-35

Whoever says he is in the light, yet hates his brother, is still in the darkness. Whoever loves his brother remains in the light, and there is nothing in him to cause a fall.

1 Jn 2:9-10

Prayer and charity, God and neighbor. The Gospel does not allow shortcuts. Whoever addresses the God of Jesus Christ is spurred to serve the brethren; and vice versa, whoever dedicates himself or herself to the poor, discovers there the mysterious Face of God.

*Address on the Fiftieth Anniversary of the
Charitable Works of Padre Pio, October 14, 2006*

DECEMBER 30, 2010



The Sixth Day in the
Octave of Christmas

Readings: 1 Jn 2:12-17; Lk 2:36-40

The child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him.

Lk 2:40

In the Child of Bethlehem, the smallness of God-made-man shows us the greatness of man and the beauty of our dignity as children of God and brothers and sisters of Jesus.

*Address to the Members of the Catholic Action
December 19, 2005*

DECEMBER 31, 2010



The Seventh Day in the
Octave of Christmas

Readings: 1 Jn 2:18-21; Jn 1:1-18

In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God.

Jn 1:1

The Lord through Sacred Scripture reawakens our reason which has fallen asleep and tells us: in the beginning was the creative Word. In the beginning the creative Word—this Word that created all things, that created this intelligent design which is the cosmos—is also love. Therefore, let us allow this Word of God to awaken us; let us pray that it will additionally illumine our minds so that we can perceive the message of creation—also written in our hearts—that the beginning of all things is creative wisdom, and this wisdom is love, it is goodness.

*General Audience
November 9, 2005*
